

# Nash's

*Dall Mall Magazine*

**MARCH**

*One Shilling Nett*

*A New Romance*

**by A.J. CRONIN**

**PEACE—IS IT POSSIBLE?**

**by LEADING WORLD THINKERS**

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# NASH'S ADVERTISERS FOR MARCH

The accompanying list of the advertisements appearing in this number is arranged alphabetically for your guidance. Eighty-

eight different products and services are here presented by firms whose integrity, through advertising, is guaranteed. These business houses have chosen Nash's for their announcements, knowing that readers of this magazine, accustomed only to the best in writing, illustrating, and printing, will want only the best in advertised goods.

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COVER DESIGN BY BRADSHAW CRANDELL

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Stamps for return postage must be enclosed with all contributions submitted.

The Editor will take every care to ensure their safe return, but he cannot be held responsible for their loss.

The Editor begs to inform the readers of NASH'S—PALL MALL MAGAZINE that the characters in the stories in this number are purely imaginary, and that no reference or allusion is intended to apply to any living person or persons.

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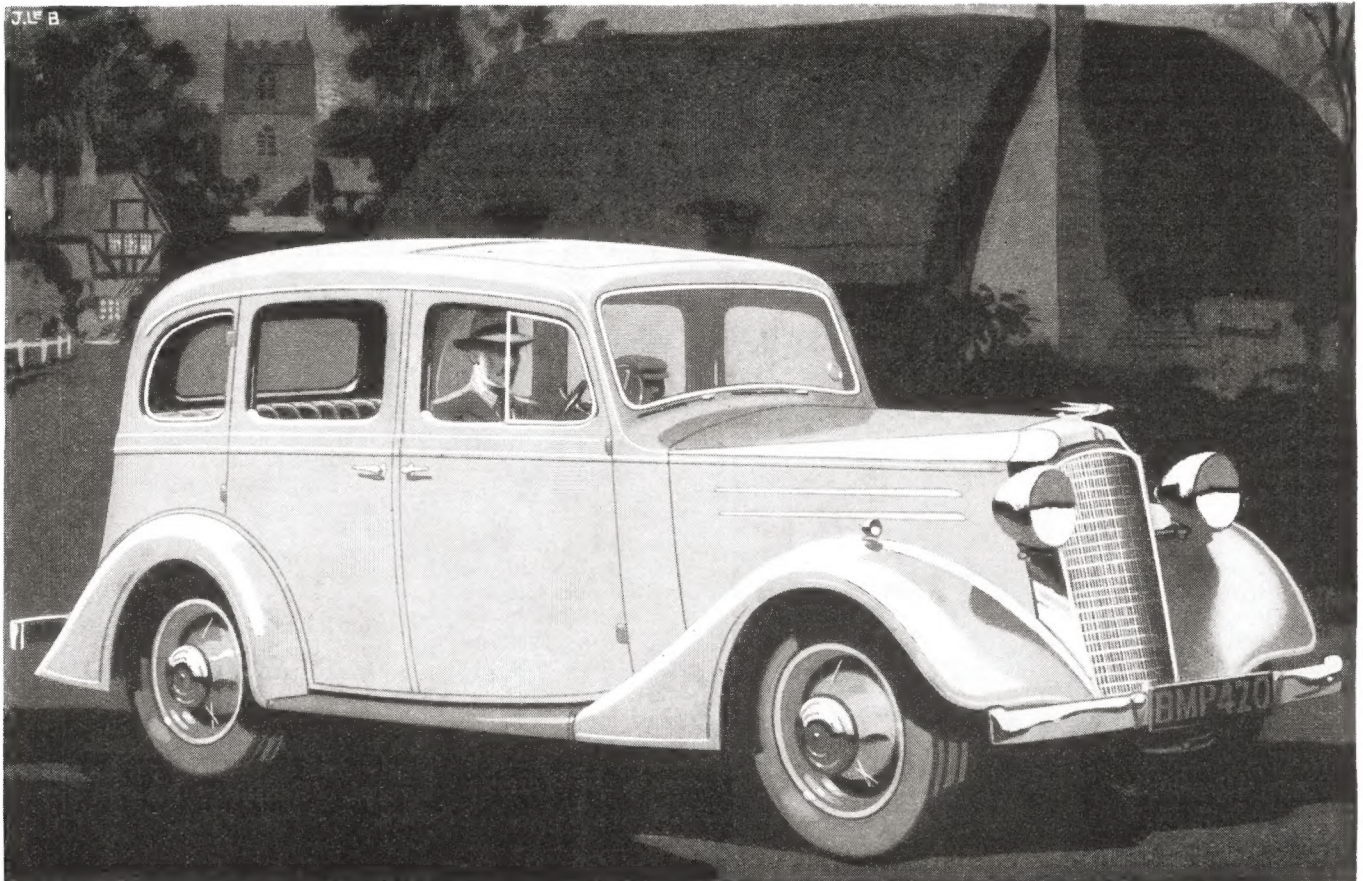
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# Editor's Calendar



## A £10 WELCOME TO BRADSHAW CRANDELL

Prizes of £5, £3 and £2 will be awarded to the writers of the three most interesting and most helpful letters on the subject of our cover artist's search for an ideal English model.

Mr. Crandell will be in England this coming Spring and will need guidance in his quest for English feminine beauty. Can you help him?

Address your letters to The Editor, Nash's Magazine, 153 Queen Victoria Street, E.C.4. Further information is found below.



Photo: Hal. Phyfe

**Bradshaw Crandell will soon be deserting this studio for a trip to England.**

**DR. CRONIN'S** is the Name-of-the-Month.

His excellent story, *Lily of the Valley*, in this number, is only one of the many tributaries flowing into his widening reputation, and we are pleased to announce another next month—an important article discussing the results of the interesting questionnaire on the cinema, which London Film Productions offered throughout the country several months ago.

Winners of prizes given in connection with the questionnaire have been announced, but no analysis of the findings has yet been published, having been completed only within the last few weeks. Full details of the results, however, have now been placed at Dr. Cronin's disposal, and these he will disclose in his NASH's article.

One of the most significant facts arising from the questionnaire is the statement made by John B. Myers, Publicity Manager of London Films, that "Dr. Cronin himself overwhelmingly tops the poll among modern novelists whose works are suggested for screening. Both *Hatter's Castle* and *The Stars Look Down*, received an enormous number of entries."

In addition, *Hatter's Castle* scored an overwhelming majority in the ballot conducted by the *Sunday Referee* last year for a prize offered by London Films who sought suggestions for a rôle for Charles Laughton. A Hollywood company, however, will produce this, but *The Stars Look Down* has been purchased for early production in an English studio.

Perhaps the biggest news concerning Dr. Cronin is the recent announcement in America that *The Stars Look Down* was the only English novel in the list of the first twelve best-selling fiction books in that country during 1935. Hence it makes us just a little jealous to announce that Dr. Cronin's next novel is to be serialised some time this year by our eminent colleague, *Good Housekeeping Magazine*. NASH's, during the year, will publish short stories and articles from his pen.

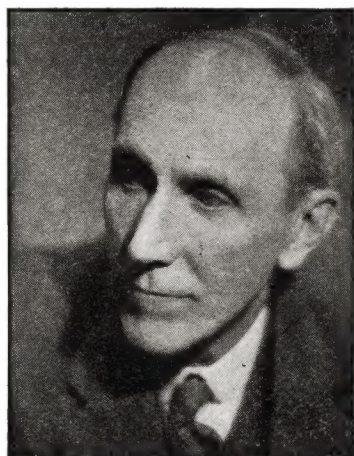


Photo: Howard Coster

**J.D. Beresford, the well-known author, will be sixty-six this month.**

**BRADSHAW CRANDELL** is

coming to visit England.

Our popular cover artist, successor to the late Harrison Fisher, wants not only a change of scene, but a change of beauty. Not that he is dissatisfied with the American girl (even if he were, he would hardly dare to admit it) but he does want to see whether the world-wide reputation of the English "peach-bloom" is deserved. More than that, he wants the inspiration of the English countryside in the spring and summer—an environment which he considers excellent for his work.

He intends to take a studio here for several months and to find the ideal English girl as a temporary model.

By way of welcoming him to these shores some time in April or May, we have a little scheme in mind in which we ask readers to participate. As announced above, we will give three prizes of Five Pounds, Three Pounds and Two Pounds to the writers of the three letters which will be most helpful to Mr. Crandell in his search for an English beauty. (Note to young and beautiful readers of NASH's: don't send your photographs or ask him to come up and see you sometime. We will let Mr. Crandell do his own discovering!)

He will want to know the most likely localities in which to look for feminine beauty and he will also want to know what type of girl is considered most representative. We will leave it to you to use your best powers of description and persuasion in guiding him in his search. No doubt he has only a vague idea of what to look for and you will have to explain to him that British beauty is not necessarily that of Hollywood.

We want you to keep your letters as short as possible and we suggest one hundred words as the limit. We will publish the prize-winning letters in an early issue, but we cannot undertake to return or acknowledge those which do not win prizes. To put a time limit, we have marked April 18th as the last date for receiving letters.

\* \* \*

**INCIDENTALLY,** we intend to use these columns every month for some sort

of contest. Next month, for instance, we are going to ask you to try your skill in guessing how the Laurence Kirk novel will end, and in the following months we will announce further diverting competitions. The prizes each month will total Ten Pounds.

\* \* \*

**A STORY** by Edith Wharton, such as *The Looking-Glass* this month, is a rarity and therefore even more valuable than its intrinsic merit makes it. The last one of hers published in NASH's appeared in February, 1933, but we trust we shall not have to wait so long for the next.

Mrs. Wharton is undoubtedly the *doyenne* of American women writers. At the age of seventy-four she is still as productive as most of her younger contemporaries. Since 1899 she has written a great many books, among the better known of which are *Ethan Frome*, *The Age of Innocence* and *Twilight Sleep*. Her latest book was *A Backward Glance*, published in 1934.

\* \* \*

**ANOTHER** writer who has not appeared in NASH's for some time is J. D. Beresford, whose story in this issue is a good example of his skill with the detective mystery. Mr. Beresford will be sixty-six this March, and he too has a long list of books to his credit, starting with a novel called *Jacob Stahl*, published in 1911.

Unlike his son, who, at twenty-two has already finished a novel, Mr. Beresford had a long struggle before he found his *métier*. He worked for twelve years as an architectural draughtsman and as an apprentice, until he finally despaired of ever being able to set up in private practice. He then turned to copywriting, to reviewing and, eventually, to his own literary work.

\* \* \*

**IN** talking with Helen Simpson recently on a variety of subjects which we thought might make good topics for





# INCANNES, NICE, MONTE CARLO—YOU'LL FIND YARDLEY COMPLEXIONS NOW IN EVIDENCE

ONE may see more pretty women, perhaps, within a stone's throw of the Casino at Cannes than may be counted within a mile of Piccadilly Circus. Yet have you ever thought that the difference is not in actual eyes, ears, mouths and noses?

How to face southern suns (or grim days in the north) with such fresh, radiant skins that the onlooker overlooks mere features, is fortunately no secret. On the Riviera they're beginning to call it "the Yardley complexion." For Yardley's delightful new preparations for skin care are available at the nearest better chemist, store or coiffeur, wherever there are lovely women.

Yardley's subtle success with every type of skin is the result of

the most careful study. Yardley's "Beauty Secrets from Bond Street" set forth exactly the right treatment for exactly your needs; the exquisite new preparations (in their lovely containers) wash, cleanse, stimulate, nourish and prepare you for your Yardley make-up. Whether your skin is normal, dry or oily, you'll find that Yardley takes care of you. A few minutes a day at home with Yardley will transform you into the new and better-looking woman you'd be on the brilliant Côte d'Azur. In our Salon in Bond Street, Mary Foster, Yardley's Beauty Consultant, will give you full directions or your first treatments. Or write for our free book in colour "Beauty Secrets from Bond Street."



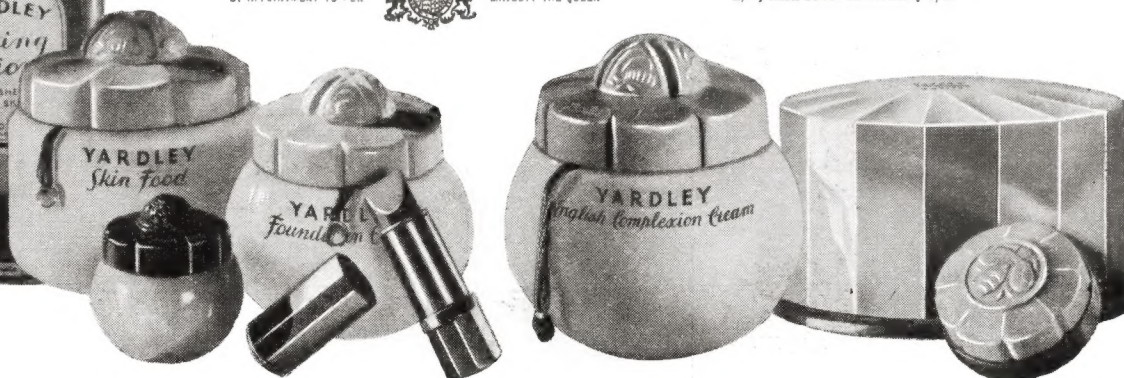
FOR SKIN CARE: English Complexion Cream cleanses and nourishes normal skins, 3/6 (triple size 7/6); Toning Lotion removes cream and stimulates all skins, 2/6 (triple size, 5/6); Skin Food nourishes and rejuvenates, 3/6 (triple size, 7/6); Skin Lotion, for arms and neck, also a powder foundation for oily skins, 2/6 (triple size 5/6); Foundation Cream, for oily or normal skins, 2/6; Liquefying Cleansing Cream cleanses pores, removes make-up, 3/6 (triple size 7/6); Trial Beauty Boxes for each type of skin, 5/6.

FOR MAKE-UP: Orchis Face Powder, 2/-; Rouge Cream, 2/-; Lipstick, 3/-; Eyeshadow, 2/-; and Nail Enamel, 1/6.

BY APPOINTMENT TO HER



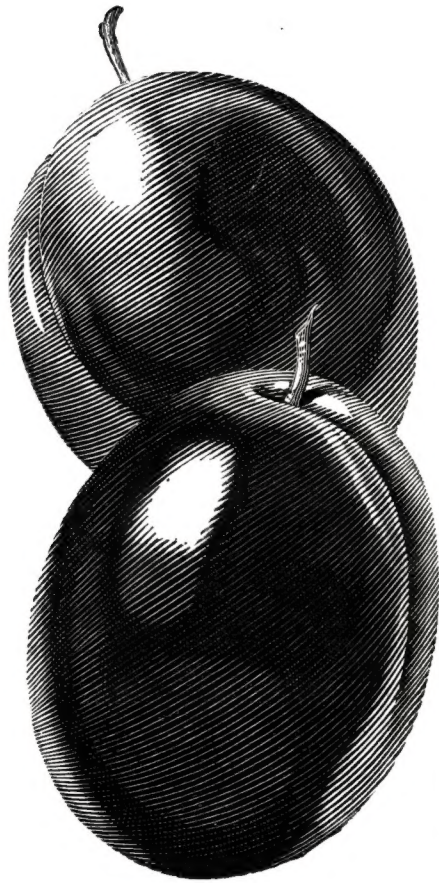
MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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nk you!

DON'T FORGET! Rowntree's Fruit Clear Gums (Hard) and Fruit Pastilles (Medium) are sold loose, 6d. per ¼lb.; in packets 2d., 3d. and 6d. Juicy-Fruits (Soft), 6d. per ¼lb. and in packets 6d. *Gar. 3 N.*

articles, it occurred to us to forget our readers for the moment and to ask her the same question which we had put to Sir Wilfred Grenfell for his contribution in this issue: What interests you most in the world to-day?

Her reply was immediate: "The plight of the voluntary hospitals."

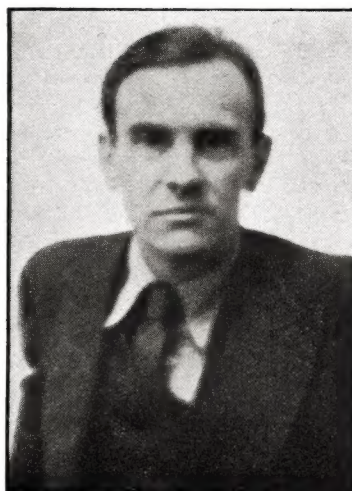
There was a good reason for her answer, for her husband is Denis Browne, surgeon since 1928 to the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street. Miss Simpson herself has done a great deal of work for the voluntary hospitals and has written her article, not only from a realistic point of view, but with deep sympathy.

In addition to this interest, she is also an authority on witchcraft, as well as the author of such books as *Boomerang*, *The Woman on the Beast* and *Saraband for Dead Lovers*.

**THYRA SAMTER WINSLOW**, who reveals in this number that she is ten years younger than her husband, and remarks, in effect, "So what?" is the well-known American novelist and short-story writer. Englishwomen, it appears, are not as ready to disclose such personal information.

**OUR** short novel this month is not strictly a short novel. *The Truth About Mrs. Brown* would probably be better named a full-length character study—and that still seems an inadequate description. For Mrs. Brown is as real as our next-door-neighbour, and her story is as vivid as the play we saw last night. (Hint to producers: *The Truth About Mrs. Brown* would make a good play itself.)

The author, V. S. Pritchett, knows his subject well, for he says, with profound depression, that probably he has stayed in more furnished rooms than any other living writer. He has had a strange life. At one time he was employed for some years in a Bermondsey leather warehouse, which provided him with the material for his



**V. S. Pritchett, the author who contributes this month "The Truth About Mrs. Brown."**

last book, *Nothing Like Leather*. After leather he went to Paris and attempted to sell glue, feathers, exotic gums, photographic materials and theatre tickets—which left him quite penniless, as might be expected. Then he tried journalism, but says that he was too hot-headed for politics, with the result that he turned to writing short stories and novels.

He prefers the short story to the novel form, believing the modern public likes the shorter tale.

**LAURENCE KIRK** and his wife, the former Stella Tennyson Jesse, left early in February, by sea, for Spain, taking their car with them for a tour through the land where the £ is worth 24s. Before he departed Mr. Kirk left with us the MSS. of two new short stories and the promise of others to be written in time for our late summer numbers. The two we have will be published immediately after the final instalment of *Rings on her Finger* appears in the May issue.

**ANOTHER** pair of MSS. for early publication in **NASH's** have come from Hugh Walpole in Hollywood, the first of which, entitled *The White Cat*, is being illustrated for May. On the strength of their great interest and unusual quality we have ordered four more which Mr. Walpole has promised he will write during this year. They are Hollywood stories, by the way—the first fiction results of the author's film environment.

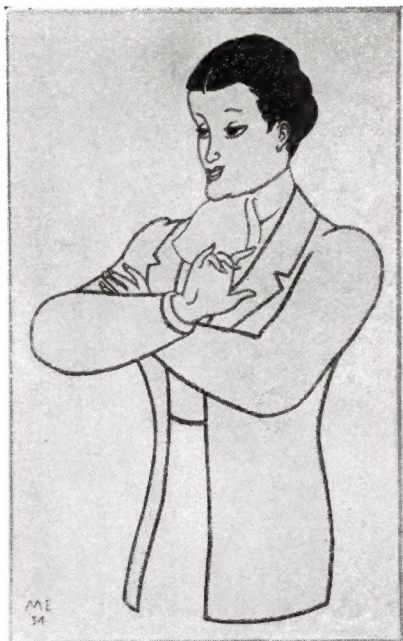
**EVERY** day since we began publication of Beverley Nichols' articles on religion, letters have been coming to this office marked "Personal" and "Please Forward," addressed to Mr. Nichols. Dutifully we have sent them on to him, but in a spirit of great curiosity. What do they say? Are they confessions, pleas for help and guidance in trouble, Biblical discussions, questions of doubt? It would be interesting to know—but Mr. Nichols keeps faith with his correspondents. The letters are not for publication.

**AMONG** the stories for next month (including a superb ghost story by Walter de la Mare and one called *The Truce* by Pearl Buck, which we have been promising for several months) is a piece which takes the form of a one-act play. It bears the title *Please To Look Pleasant*, and its author is Laurence Housman.

As everyone knows by now, Mr. Housman's play *Victoria Regina*, starring Helen Hayes, is now the biggest stage success on Broadway. On this side it was banned by the Lord Chamberlain, except of course for club production, because of the rule forbidding the personification on the stage of Royalty until fifty years after their death.

The play has been published in book





This caricature is not by Helen Simpson herself, but Malcolm Easton.

form, however, and now Mr. Housman has sent us a new and hitherto unpublished additional scene for it. *Please To Look Pleasant* is a light, witty and possibly true episode from the Queen's later life. The theme is inspired by an anecdote relating to an occasion on which she was to have had her photograph taken.

\* \* \*

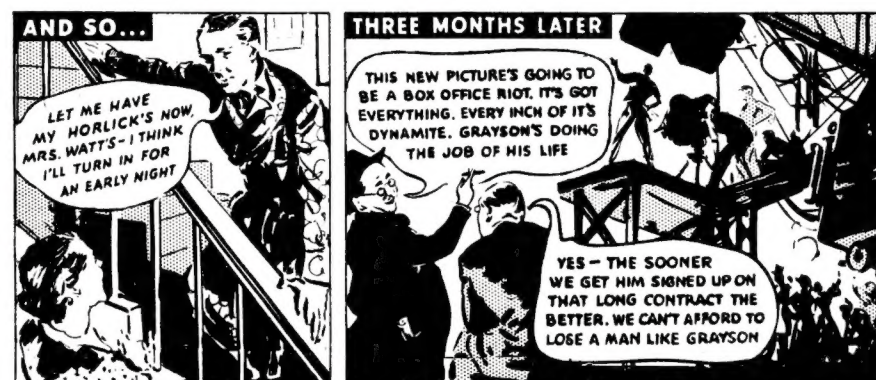
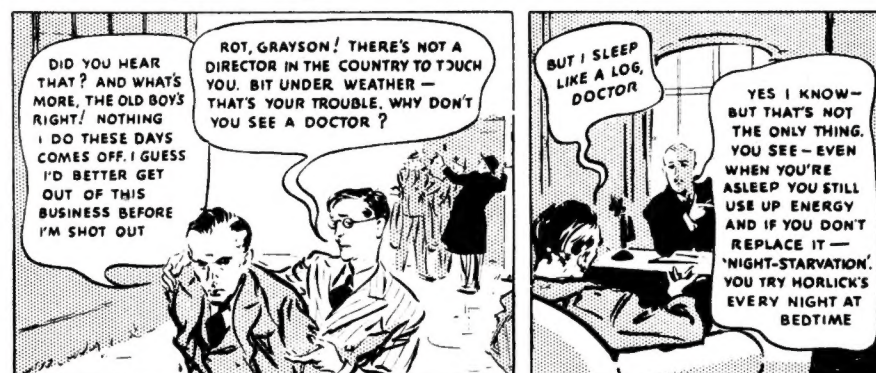
**S**PEAKING of Queen Victoria makes us think of Windsor Castle, where many of Mr. Housman's best scenes are laid. And that reminds us that we have for next month's publication a group of striking photographs of the castle and its staff taken exclusively for NASH's by Erich Salomon, the famous "candid camera" photographer. There are several views of the buildings which most of us have never seen before, and there are some pictures of the little-known life of the household. The appearance of the photographs will coincide with the Royal Family's annual Easter stay at Windsor.

\* \* \*

**A**LSO for next month are some unusual photographs of motor-car accidents which will accompany and illustrate an article on this great tragedy of modern times, death on the road, written by Warwick Deeping. Mr. Deeping himself is an enthusiastic motorist, but he is deeply concerned about the alarming statistics published by the office of the Ministry of Transport.

\* \* \*

**W**E keep our promises. By popular request, as they say in the music halls, another short story by Barry Perowne is to appear next month. *Limelight on Youth* it is called. He has also written for us a complete short novel to be published during the summer.



## HAS YOUR WORK LOST PUNCH?

Tired before you start — apathetic about your work — woolly-headed and unable to concentrate — are these your symptoms too? Probably you are suffering from "Night-Starvation." Remember that the mere act of sleeping uses up energy which must be replaced. If it is not replaced you wake up tired, your work and your happiness suffer.

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## HORLICK'S GUARDS AGAINST NIGHT-STARVATION

THIS MEANS YOU SLEEP SOUNDLY, WAKE REFRESHED, AND HAVE EXTRA ENERGY ALL DAY





Photo: Fox

"Appropriateness possesses beauty": Sunset in the heart of Manchester.

THIS year has an extra day to it; and I, for one, am delighted at the thought, for I love irregularity in things that should be governed by reason. I like a moveable Easter, based on dead systems of superstition, and a shilling with twelve pennies to it; should abhor an Easter anchored to a day annually recurrent, and "of benefit to the business community," a decimal shilling, or thirteen months of an equal length (life should never be fashioned for the business man, who has long had things all too much his own way). Reason should, I feel, be reserved to the spheres in which it ought to predominate; for law—albeit its pleasant anomalies are manifold—for politics, and for domestic problems, such as the abolition of fogs; a thing easily remedied.

And fogs are a subject upon which I feel strongly. The journey from Sheffield, through that high, bleak, romantic country of stone wall and moor, had been extremely beautiful and strange: for the hills—little mountains rather than hills—and the fields of dark, peaty turf, were hidden with snow which glittered, seemingly under the most brilliant of Alpine skies, and the bare trees were all hung with crystal.

But, on arriving in Manchester (whither I journeyed for the production of Mr. Charles B. Cochran's new revue, *Follow the Sun*, which, when you read these words, will have reached London), I found a thick black fog, and during the four ensuing days saw no daylight. Since the rehearsals lasted all night, this possessed, it is true, certain advantages. Going to

## General Conversation

bed every day at five o'clock in the morning, you no longer know—can know or need know—day from night. Nevertheless, I found my mind continually reverting to the Mediterranean—not, now, as formerly, to Italy, the very thought of which is, at the moment, a grief to every Englishman who loves it, and makes him abhor the policies of both Italy and England—but, for example, to Spain or the Riviera.

I tried, from time to time, to walk for a few minutes in this stupendous city. But, in such weather, all the whimsies of the City Council, the rockeries built on islands in the traffic, the little Japanese temples and iris pools, seemed madness itself. A public garden, covered with dirty snow, on which the soot falls continually in a suffocating cloud, reminiscent of Bulwer Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*, constitutes in itself an unpleasant kind of mockery, whereas in other climes a little artifice goes a long way.

For example: I have always been surprised at, and fascinated by, the various constructions in cement which are to be found along the Italian and French Rivières; cement cast to resemble rough, rustic woodwork, with peeling bark. Always I had imagined that by no possible combination of art with circumstance could such a substance appear anything but hideous in the extreme. Nevertheless, in the *Jardins Exotiques* of Monaco, upon that rocky slab of hillside between the two Corniche roads, thus after a miraculous fashion converted into a Mexican cliff or flowering fragment of lunar landscape, it indeed looks well. Natural rocks, together with artificial ones, again of cement, cactuses of every sort and shape—long and thin, resembling gigantic spiders and daddy-long-legs, squat and obese, created in the likeness of octopuses and curious marine beasts—there mingle together in a harmonious and intimidating whole. It seems, too, an appropriate translation of the Casino, and of the money which changes hands in its halls, into terms of the vegetable kingdom, just as the Oceanic Museum on the pro-



Photo: Hoppe

"It is proposed to destroy and rebuild one of the most beautiful cities—Bath."

montory opposite, with its anomalous deep-sea creatures, is a salt-water interpretation of the same theme.

Appropriateness, then, ever possesses a certain beauty, and Manchester, in the winter, should surely become—as will all cities in the future, for fear of bombs—an underground warren, or should concentrate upon indoor spectacles. Thus it was beautiful that so much glitter and transient loveliness as Mr. Charles B. Cochran offers us should have been brought to birth in this dark city, where even in the day-time you must live by artificial light—though perhaps Professor Stern's warmly coloured and romantic renderings of Cuban scenes, beautiful as they were, lacked this poetical appropriateness. Certainly one wonders what the dancers, and what the band from Havana, thought of the unfamiliar surroundings of this dark city. Their minds surely must revert, as mine to the Mediterranean, to their native island, with its palms and the warm wash of its seas upon a golden coast.

Where the day had so little to offer, the night certainly atoned for its deficiency. The rehearsals, which on two occasions occupied more than twelve hours, I found to be full of interest. For I like to watch things growing and shaping, and this is the chief charm and the absorbing fascination of any rehearsal; the sudden decision to cut or expand, and the alterations in lighting or costume.

And how singular and fascinating—because so whole-hearted—is that queer tribe of persons whose life is the theatre; the carpenters, scene-





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*From all hairdressers, chemists and stores.*



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The only bright spot in Manchester was C. B. Cochran's rehearsals of his new revue "Follow the Sun"



shifters, lime-light men, dressmakers, stage-managers, no less than the performers, who, in the interval of waiting for their turns, sit in the stalls in their fantastic garb, intent on the performance! In the upper boxes I noticed the Cuban trumpeters with huge purple frilled sleeves and with turbans balanced above their dark faces, watching for hours at a time. Moreover, the entire atmosphere had about it a general cosmopolitanism which seemed pleasant in these times of strident and arrogant national creeds. People of every sort and colour mingled in this miniature world in the making.

Several children sat there too, for part of the time, falling asleep every now and then, in spite of their intense curiosity concerning the proceedings. Never, I imagine, had they been so happy, for they felt of adult importance, and at the same time they obviously took a childish pleasure in the details of their temporary disguises. And, looking at them, one wondered whether among them there might not, perhaps, be hidden some representative of that most tragic phase of human genius, the child prodigy. For how rare is the child marvel who, after the manner of Mozart, grows up to a proportionate maturity; how sad must be the after years of the great executant prodigies of music, the violinists and pianists! Almost one wishes that a home could be founded for them, where they could live on the wealth accumulated during their short years of astonishing accomplishment—if their parents had not already squandered it!—far away from crowds which formerly so applauded them. There, perhaps, they might be able to forget their lost genius.

But the sadness of their fates is rivalled by that of their parents. What, you may well ask yourself, would be the correct procedure for that most unhappy couple; what standard should they set themselves? Indeed, theirs is a difficult, ill-requited position. Ought they, for

example, to insist on the exploitation of their offspring, in the certainty that never in the years of maturity will he so excel (in which case he will, in time to come, most surely attribute the diminution of his powers to their unworthy greed for money); or should they strive to obscure the present radiance, in the hope, by no means confident, that in later life it *may* shine out more brightly? And how will they blame themselves, subsequently, for all their care, if this fruition does not occur?

In the interval of such thoughts, there are the papers to be bought. . . . After a short period of apparent repentance, the two Archbishops are again trailing their robes in blood. The Archbishop of York is reported as having said, on his arrival in New York, that we need a new war, to make the League *safe*, as we needed the last one in order that it might be born. It is difficult to believe that even so mischievous an old gentleman as the Archbishop of York could have made so foolish and wicked a statement, and surely he must have been misreported! . . . And poor Sir Samuel Hoare was forced to leave the Foreign Office because he wanted to make peace! . . .

It is impossible, I suppose, to be more pro-Italian and anti-Abyssinian than I am by inclination, although I long for the war to stop and must admit to a feeling of sympathy for the Negus, because of his personal dignity no less than because of his diplomacy. (The massed diplomats of Europe hardly seem a match for him!) But, albeit we repeat continually that as a nation we bear no ill-will towards Italy, and that her quarrel is with the League and not with England, I believe that a personal attitude such as mine, dictated by love of Italy and the Italians, is very unpopular here. The self-righteous, the political-governesses, who are all for helping everyone to help themselves, the pacific busybodies all over the country, are clamant for war. . . . But which of them is willing personally to lift a



finger for the cause? Which of them is proposing to make a start and turn the Italians out of Abyssinia? English policy seems to me for the moment to have lost all sense of reality, to be living in an ideal and illusional world quite as removed as is the theatre itself from everyday life.

As for the Government, it cannot be denied that it has done very badly since the election, or is it since Lord Londonderry left them? Was he their mascot?

To bring home the impossibility of the attitude we have adopted, I am engaged on a scheme to buy up masterpieces of Abyssinian painting and present them to the National Gallery to take the place of the Italian pictures; that curious product of a brutal and uncivilised people. No doubt a number of persons—dons, professors of all kinds and many a cultured clergyman—will enthusiastically support my proposal. In the meantime, I appeal, through the medium of this column, for help and advice toward the realisation of this plan.

Looking round—through the fogs of Manchester or London—at the statues and buildings and traffic blocks, one feels that the bombing of English cities to which our foreign policy appears to be leading up, is, after all, an end in itself to be desired. Thus London has lost its old cachet without gaining, like New York, a new one. . . . And yet, the only city that it is proposed to destroy and rebuild is one of the most beautiful in the world—Bath. . . . Worse still, its would-be assassins are its own sons.

Those behind these new and silly proposals announce that they intend to make the city into "a perfect period town" (as though it were not already one of the greatest eighteenth-century monuments in Europe!). This they propose to achieve by pulling down and widening the chief streets. . . . Alas, if the proposals were merely to pull down two thatched cottages, full of catch-fool beams, in the Cotswolds, what an outcry there would be against the vandalism of modern times! Victory would then be sure, but it is another matter when the victim is so elegant and refined a piece of town-planning as the city of Bath.

Among books I should specially like to recommend is *The Lords of Creation*, by Frederick L. Allen, published by Hamish Hamilton at 12s. 6d.

I reserve my award for the Worst Book of the Month, hardly knowing to whom in this season I should hand the palm.

## 'This hot sauce makes everybody fond of puddings.'

SAYS LADY MURIEL  
BECKWITH

*Lady Muriel is a great enthusiast for good cooking. The recipes given in these articles are her own invention, and many have been used in her own home for years.*



Lady Muriel's own  
recipe for  
HOT SAUCE

Steamed puddings are splendid for everybody in cold weather. Give your family plenty of them. How easy it is to say that! But in reality, both you and I know that men and children are not always so ready to eat what's good for them!

I must say, in this case, I've got a certain amount of sympathy with their objections. When a steamed pudding, however nice, appears at lunch or dinner with a pale, pasty, tasteless white sauce, I don't much want to eat it myself.

But how different I feel when it's accompanied by a bowl of hot, freshly made Birds Custard! Why, its very fragrance is appetising. The flavour is really delicious, and the smooth creaminess is just what substantial puddings need to take away their dryness.

I really can't imagine why any housewife ever troubles to serve any other kind of hot sauce but Birds. There's nothing so quick and easy to make.

And another thing. I don't know if you realise it, but Birds is no ordinary custard. Combined with the sugar and milk, it's a splendid energy-forming food—light, digestible, and a really valuable addition to winter diet.

Now, may I give you a recipe of my own for a special hot Birds Custard sauce? It's quite simple to make, and very, very good. Here it is . . .

*Take two measures or one pint packet of Birds Custard. Mix together with  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoonful of ground ginger—and make exactly according to the directions on the packet, but adding a small knob of butter to the milk when you boil it. Serve it freshly made—and steaming hot.*

HAVE YOU SENT FOR  
YOUR PRESENT?

*Birds are giving away quite free a delightful box of their delicious Blancmange—enough for three full pints, in three flavours. I needn't tell you how delicious it is—it's Birds! All you have to do is to send your address and part of an empty packet of Birds Custard to Birds, Dept. J.19, Thames House, Millbank, London.*

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THAT MAKES  
IT THE FAVOURITE

# BIRDS CUSTARD

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# LETTERS

## Graves

... In an article in your January issue, *General Conversation*, Mr. Osbert Sitwell states that I am known locally in Majorca as "*Graves Supérieur*." This would not be worth printing even if it were true, which it is not. The joke is lifted from a book of my own, where it refers to one of my relatives, not myself.

You ought to insist on your contributors being original, however inaccurate. I mean, you pay well enough, from all accounts.

ROBERT GRAVES,  
Deyá,  
Majorca,  
Balearic Isles.

**Due credit for the source of a good joke is hereby acknowledged.**

## Legal

... As you say that you welcome comments from your readers, I make the following observations on your January issue:

*Rings On Her Finger.* Mr. Forsyth, having been a solicitor, could never have been so incredibly foolish as to write a letter threatening proceedings, as he thereby rendered himself liable to a fine of £50, to be indicted for misdemeanour, or summary prosecution. Mr. Crunch, being ultra respectable, would send the letter to the Secretary of the Law Society at once, but, if he stifled his conscience, he would certainly use the threat of so doing as a lever towards a settlement. Mr. Forsyth could not start any proceedings; he could assist the plaintiff to issue a writ in person, but could not recover any costs against either the plaintiff or defendant.

The author seems under the impression that being struck off the rolls doesn't make much difference!

*The Optimists.* Cynthia's father, who died before or at the beginning of the war, must either have inherited or made his fortune; in either case it is unlikely that he would make his will on a sixpenny form, and his will couldn't possibly have been drawn up by a lawyer. It is also improbable that, as he only gave his wife an annuity of £500, he should appoint her sole trustee. When Mr. Fitch proved the will he would, of course, point out to the widow that she must appoint an additional trustee, as a sole trustee cannot give a receipt, and, as a minor cannot either, the gift of the full income to Cynthia on her attaining eighteen could not take effect. Who was the other trustee, and why did he allow the capital to be encroached upon? Mr. Fitch apparently knew of the breaches of trust before they were committed, and it is hinted that he could have prevented them. It is improbable that he was the additional trustee, as the will would contain no power to charge, but if he knew of the proposed breaches it would be his duty to do everything in his power to prevent them even to the extent, if necessary, of applying to the court on behalf of the infant for an injunction.

Then, when Cynthia has attained

## NEXT MONTH:

A. J. CRONIN  
WARWICK DEEPING  
PEARL S. BUCK  
WALTER DE LA MARE  
BARRY PEROWNE  
WALTER DURANTY  
LAURENCE HOUSMAN  
JACK LINDSAY  
ERICH SALOMON  
HAROLD ABRAHAMSON  
and others

eighteen, Mr. Fitch apparently allows her to draw cheques on capital account, which is quite impossible.

WILLIAM JACKSON,  
Leighton Court,  
Neston, Wirral,  
Cheshire.

**Point No. 1—Forsyth's methods, apparently, were based on the human fear of public scandal. He never intended to bring suit. Point No. 2—You win. And what a relief it is to take our wig off!**

## Poe

... I notice that a correspondent in your current issue, referring to your recent literary competitions, expresses disappointment at the quality of the prize-stories and at your failure to unearth a new Edgar Allan Poe, to which you reply that you are hopeful of finding a new Poe yet.

In reference to this point I should like to make the following observations: First, that literary fashions have changed so enormously since Poe's day that only a profound literary scholarship and a rigid detachment from current literary influences could enable any modern writer to approach either the style or subject-matter of the great American; and, secondly, that so far as Poe's manner could be reproduced at all under modern conditions, a very close imitation of it was submitted to you by myself on the occasion of your first competition in 1934.

The imitation in question was a story entitled *The Rival of the Guillotine*, and was a most successful study in Poe's style, so far as that style is compatible with modern restrictions. It failed to satisfy your judges on precisely the same grounds as those that form the distinguishing feature of Poe's own work, namely, "That it is not quite on the lines of the modern short story." Those were your actual words.

Now, I do not complain of the inability or disinclination of your judges to allow originality to weigh more with them than a tame adherence to the kind of thing that you are already in the habit of publishing. What I do object to is that, while refusing all work that departs in the slightest degree from the dreary

routine of salacity and slipshop, you should profess to be in search of the very thing that you reject when it is offered to you.

You do *not* want novelty of subject and beauty of style in your magazine. Nor are you to be blamed, your object being to make money and not to cultivate the public taste. But why be so mealy-mouthed about it? Why these hypocritical pretences, which only arouse mistaken hopes and thus add to your own burdens? Why not proclaim openly that the kind of thing you actually publish is the only kind of thing you ever intend to publish, and that those who desire something better must go elsewhere?

A. E. SULLIVAN,  
26 Furlong Road, N.7.

**You've got us all wrong. We remember your story very well and thought it nearly good enough. The contest judges did not choose it, true, but we are still hopeful that you may be a new Poe. The word "new," however, should be underlined. What have you written recently?**

## Maugham

... I have read your magazine for a good many years and I am delighted with the recent great improvements. The new *NASH's* is excellent. I have followed with great interest readers' letters, and particularly the Somerset Maugham controversy which occasionally crops up in your columns.

Presumably you encourage your readers to give their opinion on writers, so as to convey to you the trend of your public's taste. People are therefore quite justified in saying so if they do not like Mr. Maugham's writings. But some of the criticisms can hardly be termed helpful. Among them are those who condescendingly admit that Mr. Maugham is an author of a certain degree of talent, but suggest that he should, for their own particular amusement, reform and change his style. It seems a little arrogant to apply a general term like "style" to a writer from whose versatile pen have flowed such varied works as *Of Human Bondage*, *Ashenden*, *Cakes and Ale*, and *Don Fernando*, their only similarity being the brilliance of their conception and execution.

Those who decry Mr. Maugham usually refer to his "morbid" stories about the East. Perhaps they have not read the books mentioned above, none of which is set in the East. Perhaps they have neither read the delightful *Gentleman in the Parlour*, which, though entirely about the East, radiates such peace and serenity that it cannot fail to be anything but balm even to the most troubled mind. Perhaps they do not realise that there are others who love and admire Mr. Maugham's work and eagerly look forward to every new creation of this great genius.

MRS. H. G. HOWARD,  
Shortlands,  
Nungambakum,  
Madras.

**And that seems to dispose of the critics as neatly and as briefly as anything we've read.**





**" KENSITAS\* WAS MY GREAT DISCOVERY, IT'S THE  
PLAIN-TIP CIGARETTE THAT DOESN'T HURT MY THROAT"**

*Winifred Shutter*

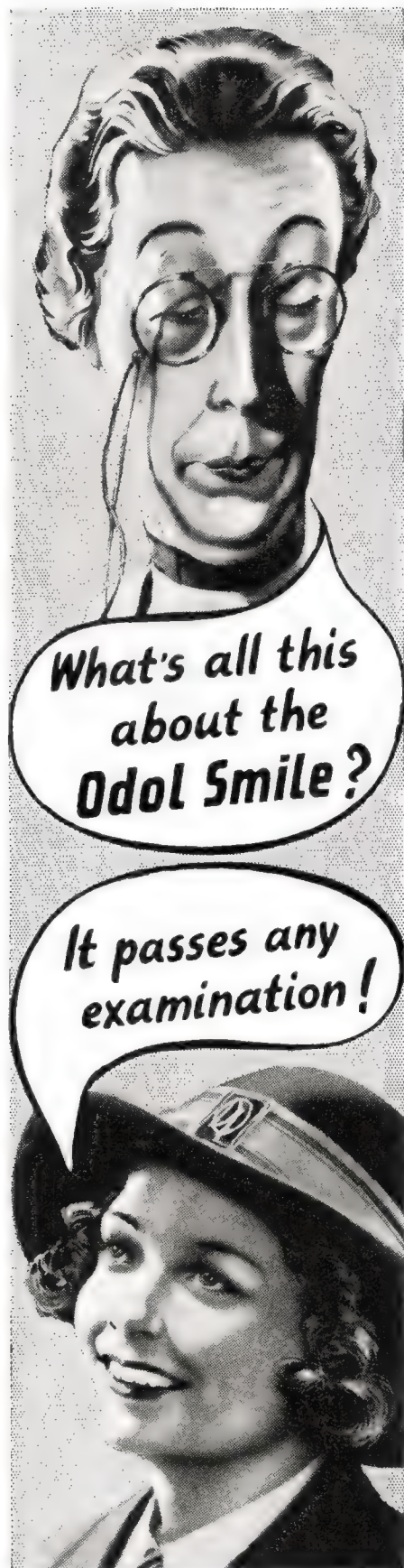
Winifred Shutter, the charming and popular film star.

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Gar. 14

## Casual

... With all appreciation of a certain amount of de-Americanisation of NASH's Magazine, I still suggest that its original (small) form appealed more to the real reader.

I fear I can only be a very casual buyer, instead of the regular subscriber I used to be, before the calamity occurred, and of which I complained at the time. (*Verb. sap.*)

MAJOR R. A. CHRYSTAL,  
Junior United Service Club,  
S.W.1.

Well, Major, we're glad that you can't resist us once in a while.

## Charlie

... The enclosed from *The Rhodesian Sunday Mail* may interest you:

### A QUEER THING

A little while ago I was idly turning the pages of a not very recent copy of NASH's, a number issued this year. I came to an article on India by Robert Bernays, M.P., called *Getting at the Truth*. The beginning of the article was ornamented with a double-page illustration, with two "supporters." On one side was a magnificent Bengal lancer; on the other side was an equally striking picture of a European officer in uniform. I looked, and looked again. "Who's that?" I asked somebody standing by. "Charlie Gibbs," he said. And sure enough, it was he—Capt. C. D. Gibbs, of the 1st Battalion Rhodesia Regiment. The matter was put beyond doubt by the word "Rhodesia" on the shoulder-strap. Now, how in the name of all that is wonderful does Capt. C. D. Gibbs, of the Rhodesia Regiment, come to be sharing with a magnificent Bengal lancer the burden of supporting the British Raj in India? Mark you, he looks it all over. But how does he do it? I bet there was no one more surprised than the said Capt. C. D. Gibbs when he saw that picture—if he has seen it yet. Anyhow, it should be framed and hung up in the mess.

HILDA STOKES,  
88 Church Road,  
Richmond.

We hope Charlie didn't feel too far away from home.

## Views

... I hope you will forgive me for troubling you with this letter, but I have been a consistent reader of your magazine from the beginning, right back to the first issue of the original Pall Mall.

You frequently print stories by American writers, the value of which is, to my mind, greatly prejudiced by the fact that the writers attempt to create a British atmosphere by British names with the result that the story is neither one thing nor the other. The ignorance they betray of English customs entirely defeats the intention to make the story appear to be other than American.

My present complaint, however, relates to three of the stories in the January number. I hope you are not going to lead readers to think that they have to buy a certain amount of rubbish in order to secure some good stories, as is certainly the case with certain other magazines, but the two stories *Jeremy* and *Stymie* are so extraordinarily below your general high standards that I feel I may as a reader

of the magazine offer some protest.

Further, may I refer to *The Fall of the Sparrow*, a story which is framed on lines which are in my judgment bound to cause offence to a great number of your readers, particularly those who welcome, and are most keenly interested in, Mr. Beverley Nichols' articles in the current issue and last number.

Finally, I hope you will not regard this letter as an impertinence. I only wish there were some means of testing the judgment of my fellow subscribers—I cannot think but what my views would be widely supported. I think I must ask Mr. Gilbert Frankau if Pamela has not slipped up in *The Optimists*. She does not explain how Cynthia's capital was squandered when she had such an efficient solicitor to look after her affairs.

A. J. HICKS,  
Seal Hollow House,  
Sevenoaks.

If Nash's had a small circulation we could afford to please one type of reader. But it has a greatly diversified circulation, although not too great to cheapen our standards.

We do not want to make a magazine that is subject to a common denominator. Hence, in some respects, we disagree with you. Regarding "The Optimists": the point is obscure, but read again. The solicitor wasn't given a chance.

## Climbing

... Owing to absence I missed Mr. Platt's letter in the December issue. He has intentionally missed my points. I said:

(1) That his descriptions of climbing methods were ludicrous.

(2) That he knows nothing of climbing and is therefore not competent to criticise G. B. Stern.

He denies neither, but attempts to sidetrack. Here again he displays his ignorance. The events described in the book he mentions are over half a century old. The particular passage he refers to is not relevant.

If Mr. Platt wishes to extend his vicarious arm-chair climbing experiences, I shall be pleased to recommend him to some modern authors where, after some study, he may gain a rudimentary knowledge of the subject. But I shall never be able to take away his prerogative—the prerogative of the ignorant to criticise the less ignorant.

COURTNEY BRYSON,  
54 Hamilton Road,  
Brentford,  
Middlesex.

Now, then, gentlemen, let's not stand here on the edge of this crevasse, arguing. We want to make the top of Mt. Everest in time for tea.

## Farmer

... As a reader of your magazine, I must state that I enjoy it very much and get it every month without fail. It means a great deal to me, as I am a farmer in a vast space. At night, after a day's toil, it is great to be able to pick up NASH's and forget one's troubles.

I wonder if I am asking too much of you by asking you to help me get hold of some pen friends, who would like to exchange news with a South African farmer. I am twenty-one years of age, height 6 ft. 2 in., very fond of sport and physical culture, will send snaps of self to pen friends and of the vast veld and grand



Drakensburg Mountains. I have also had some narrow escapes in these vast spaces, and will be a good pen friend to those who care to write.

It is lonely here, and I would like to hear about other countries and people's ways, to compare with our country. So, I hope you will be so kind and help me search for pen friends, both young men and young ladies from the age of eighteen to twenty-four years. Please excuse me taking liberties.

GEORGE WILLIAM COLLING,  
Broadview Farm,  
Colenso,  
Natal,  
South Africa.

Not at all. Meanwhile we'd like to hear more about your narrow escapes.

## Congratulations

... I would like to congratulate you on two excellent short stories that appeared in your magazine. *The Lady or the Tigress*, by Edison Marshall, from the November issue, and *Thoroughbred*, by Albert Richard Wetjen, from the Christmas number. I would add that both of them were admirably illustrated.

ISABEL JACKSON,  
40 Firdene,  
Surbiton,  
Surrey.

Do write to us again!

## Mistakes?

... I am surprised at the silly mistakes in the January issue. You should shudder on seeing the incorrect spelling of "acknowledgment" (page 87). Certainly a bridegroom would shudder at the thought of wearing a brightly coloured tie at the ceremony. No barrister would invoke the judge's wrath by lounging about the court whilst questioning a witness. And pity the "beautiful" woman shown on page 62 with such a gouty hand!

J. A. WORRALL,  
61 St. Clement's Mansions,  
Lillie Road,  
Fulham, S.W.6.

The Oxford Dictionary gives "acknowledgement" first with an e, secondly without an e. You may take your choice. Regarding the other objections, these result from artists' "styles." Good art work is seldom realistic down to the last button.

## Authors

... I am gratified to learn, from your comment to my letter in the January issue of NASH'S, that you think the suggestion of a literary competition [based on readers' opinions of authors' personalities as revealed through their writings] is a good one, and very much hope that we may hear more of it later on. If the literary victims prove too shy, however, perhaps a signed copy of one of their works might be substituted for the personal interview as a prize.

MRS. M. PATTERSON,  
Donington Hall,  
Near Derby.

That would make it easier for the authors. Their creative work is one thing, their personal appearance is quite another. The best known exception to this was the late John Galsworthy.



**"She's got a wretched skin—  
in spite of all that make-up"**

Until she overheard that remark, Helen was enjoying the party. She'd been flattering herself that her new foundation cream had hidden those nasty spots of hers. Now she was miserable. Dejectedly, she left the drawing-room, and went upstairs to put on more powder. She found Rose there.

"Oh, Rose," she said, "I'm fed up. This wretched skin of mine makes me feel so self-conscious."

"It's those spots you're worried about, isn't it?" said Rose sympathetically. "I notice you nearly always have them. Why don't you take Eno's 'Fruit Salt' every morning—and get rid of them?"

Helen looked a little put out.

"Please don't be offended," said Rose. "My skin was far more unsatisfactory than yours till I began taking Eno. You know, we girls don't take much

care of our health, do we? With late nights, no exercise, rich food and all that, it's obvious one's system must get sluggish. And Eno's by far the best thing for keeping one up to the mark."

Well, Helen was a sensible girl. She realised there was a lot of truth in what Rose said. She started taking Eno every morning. How pretty she is now! Eno has washed away all the impurities which had collected in her system. Eno has purified her blood and cleared away all her blemishes. She not only looks a different being—she feels it too!

Don't take a short-sighted view of beauty. Take Eno's 'Fruit Salt' every morning—and keep clean inside. Eno forms no habit. Contains no harsh aperients to upset you. It will keep you toned and tuned and give you a skin just like cream and roses.

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## *An Interesting Experience*

THIS remarkable letter, received by the proprietors of 'Ovaltine,' speaks for itself :—

Dear Sirs,

As Post Manager for the Hudson's Bay Co., at one of their Fur Trading Posts in Northern British Columbia, Canada, I had an experience which I feel you will be glad to hear about.

We were situated several miles from any doctor and did perhaps for that reason take special care of our health, although at times we got soaked in icy mountain streams and slept out in arctic blizzards. Just about this time last year a prospector from whom I had bought several ounces of gold dust came to me and said that his partner was ill.

The hard and strenuous work of placer gold mining had undoubtedly told on his physical condition, and I was told that he had spent six sleepless nights, was losing weight and was there anything I could give him. We had been using 'Ovaltine' in the mess supply and had realised that it was all that its makers claimed for it, and I decided to give this to my customer and told him to take it to his partner and make him drink it right away. I had not a whole tin in stock, but gave him what I had.

About ten days later both he and his partner snowshoed over sixteen miles of mountain trails to come for fresh supplies so that they might continue their work of washing river gravel and sand to find the small nuggets that meant so much to them.

They were very grateful to me for having given them that sample of 'Ovaltine' and the very night that the exhausted man drank his first cup of 'Ovaltine' he slept like a log and continued to improve until he was once again ready for the trail. They became steady customers for 'Ovaltine' and said that they would not be without it as it was invaluable to men leading the lives they did.

(Signed) S. E. B.







# THE KING

THE people of the European countries have tried many changes in forms of government since the Great War, but their melancholy experiments have not brought them either security or peace. Almost alone among the great and old nations, we have remained faithful to the constitutional rule under which our forefathers became prosperous and strong. Our blessing has been that the shrine for this mighty devotion was a Sovereign and a father of steadfast moral courage, whose

*The bust of King Edward VIII, reproduced above, was  
modelled from life at York House in 1932  
by Francis Doyle-Jones.*





*Photograph by Sport & General*

simple faith guided him to prayer rather than to statecraft in the hours of his people's torment. His dignity and power were increased when, through the miracle of broadcasting, we were allowed to visualise him as a man seated beside his hearth rather than as a conquerer or as a strident dictator depending upon force and words. He was a fighter in moral issues, yet he had no enemy in all the world.

In the later years of his reign, the mass of people learned to move towards the railings of Buckingham Palace

rather than to Westminster when they were anxious or in distress. Whenever the Commons failed them, the King was still the guardian of their destinies.

It is a test of grief that it should not deteriorate into self-pity. It becomes our duty to prove our gratitude by being loyal to a new King. We are the



victims of change. When King George was born, the motor-car was an inventor's dream. When the new King came from Sandringham to London on January 21, it was by aircraft. He was to rule a different Empire from that which his father inherited twenty-six years ago. Science will make it possible for him to live more quickly, and his own democratic motives will urge him to live more closely to his people than any monarch in our history.

One hundred years ago the gap between the Sovereign and the man in the street was so wide that neither comprehended nor loved the other. Queen Victoria lessened this unfortunate gulf during her long reign, and King Edward VII hailed the spirit of his time when he said: "Class can no longer stand apart from class."



*Photograph by Topical*



King George continued to bring the people nearer and nearer to the Throne, and now, with King Edward VIII, the mass of people come into full sight of their Sovereign. The miners of the distressed areas have seen expressions of sincerity upon his face which he has withheld from his peers.

It is in this that his greatest power lies: he is already the friend of his people. The new King, who has drawn the Empire so close to the parent England, through his knowledge and sympathy, begins his reign enjoying popularity and faith which most monarchs achieve only towards the end of their lives. When we contemplate the affairs of the rest of the world, it is amazing for us to realise that we have a fixed leader who can advise with knowledge but without prejudice, and draw from his people devotion without suspicion, and loyalty without fear or sentimentality.

—HECTOR BOLITHO



*Photograph by L.N.A*

*Clarenceux King-of-Arms proclaiming the new King from the steps of the Royal Exchange*





# Nash's

*Short Stories for  
March*

## **THE MONTH'S BEST FICTION**

*in eight complete tales  
of*

mystery and murder : vanity and snobbery  
love and the death of love : women and cats

*here in these pages . . .*





by A. J.  
CRONIN



# Lily

GILBERT LENNARD was a sick man when he came off the *Bremen* that grey spring day, yet his vanity carried him through the stir, the inevitable sensation of his arrival. He faced the ring of reporters and camera men with his usual sophisticated boredom, supplied some patronising information as to his immediate movements, then left for his suite at the Ritz-Waldorf with his Japanese valet, and Jones, his English secretary.

Lennard had crossed from London for the gala performance of his *Manhattan Moonshine*, a hit on Broadway for the





*The story of  
a love that  
could not  
bridge  
two worlds*

Lennard had been keeping himself up with brandy, entertaining his guests by the satiric, unsmiling brilliance of that malicious wit of his.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
E. M. JACKSON AND  
GILBERT WILKINSON

# *of the Valley*

past year, and afterwards he had it in mind to fly to the coast to supervise the final arrangements for the film production of his *Spanish Highway*. But whatever he did, or meant to do, Lennard was always a front-page splash. His fame as a playwright, composer, and producer, long escaped from the familiar aspersions of precocious brilliance, had reached the international zenith. It was no uncommon occurrence to find a Lennard play drawing the town simultaneously in London, New York, and Paris. The previous autumn, in London, three of Lennard's shows were playing

to capacity, at the same time. He had an uncanny finger for the public pulse, a flair for anticipation, and his versatility fell little short of genius. He succeeded with everything, from straight drama to light comedy. His operetta, *Perdita*, had been rated by serious critics as fit to rank with Gilbert and Sullivan. Since in his early days he had been on the stage he frequently took the lead in his own plays. He had broken into the movies with brilliant success, swelling his income, already enormous, to a staggering figure. And, beyond all this, he was young, not more

than thirty-five, smart, cynical, dissolute, and superlatively the vogue. In an orbit which swung from Mayfair to Miami he moved in that exclusive international society where the race is only to the swift. His success with women was said to be amazing. He was, in short, a celebrity of the first magnitude, who blazed in the public imagination. The report, suppressed but authentic, that at the end of a previous Atlantic crossing female passengers rushed his cabin and wrecked it in an hysterical fight for souvenirs, put the final seal on Lennard's reputation.



On this present night of his arrival in New York there was a party in Lennard's apartment. Fifty floors above the lights of Park Avenue, in the long green and gold room, decorated in the style *chinoise*, the carpets specially woven in Pekin, the lacquer from Coromandel, the priceless *Tang* ape figure squatting on the grand piano, a mob of people, famous and infamous, had gravitated by a kind of unnatural law, to see and be seen. Lennard, of course, Lennard, in his brocade dressing-gown, cigarette in the celebrated elongated holder, was holding the centre of the floor—his lined face sardonic, his eyes weary and slightly sneering. He had been keeping himself up with brandy and was now sombrely drunk, entertaining his immediate audience by the satiric, unsmiling brilliance of his wit—those malicious personalities which would subsequently be bandied about the town delightedly, as "Gilbert's latest."

Seen closely, he was not in the least good-looking; he was too spare, dark, and sallow. His tallness, combined with the angularity of his shoulders, gave him a gaunt and burnt-out look. His cheeks were deeply lined, his cheekbones prominent, and the curve of his mouth was both bitter and sad. But he had strange and fascinating charm. As usual, he was dramatising himself, using his effects to the full, deliberately occupying the spotlight. Nevertheless, it was easy to understand why women found him irresistible, why—as he phrased it—he never failed to convince any woman he wanted that his bed was her proper background. He was quite unscrupulous, his outlook so disillusioned it had fixed him in an attitude of utter cynicism. He took everything and gave nothing. He liked to call himself a realist. And to-night, as he gazed around, he decided, with a bitter smile, that despite the flattery and adulation which surrounded him, he had not one genuine friend in the world.

The party ground itself out at last. And if Lennard had been a sick man before, on the morning afterwards he felt definitely worse. He had slept badly and there was a 'ridiculous stitch' in his side, which kept at him, like a nagging wife. But with characteristic perversity he struggled into a bath-robe about eleven-thirty for coffee and an irritable survey of the Sunday newspapers. Later, his secretary came in. Lennard kept the man standing a long time before he deigned to notice him—it was a trick he had with all his servants.

"What am I doing to-day?"

"Lunching at Jonstown, Long Island, sir."

An unpleasant pause.

"Rather unimportant, sir," Jones conciliated, with one eye on the book and the other on the jaded face before him. "You promised Mr. Day you'd run down to discuss

the new Vestris contract."

"I remember," Lennard muttered, pressing his head against his hand. "But not for lunch. I couldn't stand it. Ring up Day and tell him I can't come. No, stop! it may do me good to get out of this damned apartment for a bit. Tell him I'll be down by three. But first of all get Taki to fix me a highball. I feel like the visible personification of death."

Towards three o'clock, fortified by a fair quantity of Scotch, Lennard drove down to the Day home on Long Island. It was a quiet April afternoon, and as the black and silver Rolls crossed the East River, passed through the outlying suburbs, then swished down the cold concrete speedway between fields and woodlands not yet wakened from their winter apathy, Lennard felt a curious lassitude steal over him. He hardly knew Sam Day, vice-president of the Vestris Picture Corporation, remembering him vaguely as a short, bulky, distressingly ordinary American business man. He resigned himself to the customary display of Vestris magnificence, to vulgarly ostentatious hospitality, and a flattering inveiglement towards the two hundred thousand dollar contract with which the Corporation were enticing him. Already, he felt his gorge rise; he blamed himself for coming.

But Jonstown, when he reached it, occasioned him a mild, incurious surprise. The place was not fashionable, and not at all large, a plain white Colonial house, old and simple, with severe unpillared portico set away from the road amongst perfectly natural and unspoiled surroundings. As they turned up the drive he had a vague impression of a plantation of pines, a wide, shimmering lake with its outlet in a swift mill race, then the car crunched to rest on the gravel forecourt, and somehow he was out, and in the hall.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Lennard, sir," Sam beamed all over his genial face. He was florid and baldish, and fulfilling the worst of Lennard's recollection and anticipation, he had a moist exuberance with his cigar. "We were awfully sorry you couldn't make it for lunch. But now you're here—well, that's the main thing. Yes, sir. Come right in and meet Mrs. Sam."

Lennard grimaced. Day's laugh vibrated through his head like a pneumatic drill, and the stitch which had troubled him all morning began now to grip him distressingly with every breath. Reluctantly he followed his host into the drawing-room.

"Well now, Ma. This is Mr. Lennard. I guess you've heard of him. And then some!" A boyish grin, displaying much gold, was accompanied by an expansive hand wave. "Mr. Lennard, meet my wife."

At the barbarous introduction a faint shudder passed over Lennard. He advanced frigidly

towards the woman who sat by the long french window, her face half in shadow, her figure outlined against the afternoon light. Though he barely glanced at her as she smiled without moving from her chair, he saw she was neither young nor remarkable. Yet for some reason, whether the climax of his mood or of his malaise, she roused in him a violent and immediate antipathy.

The conversation, sustained mainly by the voluble Sam, ran for a moment on depressingly conventional lines. Then, with a shy gesture, she turned.

"You look tired, Mr. Lennard. Will you let me give you some tea?"

He stared over her head with more than his usual rudeness.

"No, thank you. I'm not an addict of the muslin bag."

She smiled slightly, pleasantly.

"But neither are we. Will you have Indian or China?"

Her suburban amiability, and the failure of his offensive manner to disturb it, heightened his exasperation. The simplicity of her grey dress, the careless out-of-fashion mode in which her hair was done, a quality of repose which pervaded her body, all had their innocent part in this incitement—but it was her eyes which most acutely provoked him. They were of a light hazel, steady, direct, and so frankly unsophisticated—virginal was the word he sneeringly applied—that they outraged the first principles of his experience. Moodily, he sat and watched her as she dealt with the tea equipage which a maidservant brought in. Her movements were distressingly natural. He noticed that her fingernails were unstained by lacquer. She wore no make-up, no lip rouge. Her teeth were white and even. There were tiny lines about her eyes. She was probably almost thirty-seven, and made no attempt to conceal it. Her skin had that faint glow which comes, he ironically surmised, from health, brown Windsor soap, and fresh spring water.

But here, without warning, his physical resources yielded to the malady which, for the past twenty-four hours, had been steadily invading them. His dizziness suddenly increased and with it came an almost comic inability to fetch his breath. All at once an extraordinary darkness seemed to rush upon him from the corners of the room. He fell forward in his chair.

Everything after that was a nightmare—a confused impression of figures about him, of flurry, alarm, and general upheaval. But the pain in his chest and the surrounding mist swamped it all. Later he emerged momentarily to find himself in an upstairs bedroom with a stranger stooping over him: a spare, dry, elderly man with pince-nez, a small grey imperial, and a dangling instrument of metal and rubber.

"Yes," thought Lennard, "I'm going to be really ill." And aloud he gasped: "Get me to hospital out of here."

But the mist swept down again and Lennard did not hear the doctor's answer. He heard little during the next ten days but the harsh sound of his own breathing, which echoed in the room like a saw rasping through tough timber, and gave him the maddening

*Paris, London and New York—  
Lennard moved where the race was to the swift*



notion that he was exhausting himself upon some infinite woodpile. During that time, he lay gripped by fever and racked by a cough that had its part in the conspiracy to forbid him rest. For the most part he was delirious, but in the fleeting seconds of lucidity he had an ironic anticipation of his own obituary notices.

Yet one afternoon, as by a miracle or some such stroke of providential intervention which, had it been suggested to him, would have amused Lennard highly, he passed the crisis of his illness. And he became aware of himself lying there, in the low bed, painfully weak and emaciated, but free of all his symptoms, pervaded by the recognition that he was alive. He remained passive, his eyes on the elderly trained nurse who stood at the foot of his bed.

"That's right," she murmured encouragingly. "You feel better now, I guess. But don't talk. Dr. Archer'll be in presently."

For some reason he wanted to laugh, her triumph in his recovery was so fatuously apparent. He had the derisive fancy that she had just come through a difficult labour and that he, now opening his eyes to the light of day, was the astounding yet gratifying result.

Half an hour later Dr. Archer appeared. Though the dry cast of his features betokened a nature habitually reticent, he entered with a brisk self-satisfaction.

"Well, well, Mr. Lennard, it's good to see you yourself again." He rubbed his hands together spryly. "Believe me, you've had a pretty close call. In twenty-five years' experience I've never seen a worse double, apical pneumonia. Yes, sir, you gave us something to do these last ten days."

Lennard had a cruel impulse to prick the little man's complacency.

"Put it in the bill, then," he answered briefly and, turning over on his side, he went immediately to sleep.

It was next morning when he opened his eyes, a sweet spring morning, full of light airs and the gay sounds of birds. Neither the nurse nor Dr. Archer was in the room, but by the half-open window Mrs. Day stood arranging a bowl of fresh-cut flowers. She turned when she saw that he was awake and smiled to him in silence. Her smile, which seemed effected entirely by her eyes, those clear hazel eyes that shone with such artless and engaging candour, both puzzled and tormented him. He had a restless return of all that hostility he had felt at their first meeting, an almost angry wish to break down her reserves of amiability.

"Before you say anything let me apologise for depriving you of the excitement of my funeral."

"Why, you can't tell how glad we are that you've pulled through. . . ." She broke off with a doubtful little gesture, still smiling, yet disturbed by the hard look on his face.

He waited a moment.

"All this rejoicing bores me beyond words. I didn't plan to be ill here. And I asked you to send me to hospital. If you expect me to be grateful you're quite mistaken. That kind of sentiment revolts me"



She nodded, her troubled gaze on his. "I think I understand."

"Then the sooner we end an unfortunate situation the better. Perhaps you'll ask your husband to look in on me this morning?"

She replied quietly:

"My husband is in Los Angeles. He had to leave three days ago. He was very sorry. He said we must do everything to get you well."

An exclamation broke from Lennard, half petulant, half perverse.

"I am well. All I want is to get out of here and back to New York."

"Why, of course," she acquiesced, "whenever you wish, since you're so anxious to go."

Once again the absolute placidity with which she met his rudeness stung him beyond understanding. He bit his lip as she left the room, feeling that for all his superiority she had somehow frustrated and defeated him. He had to fall back upon Archer to vent his ill-temper. But the doctor, who called about eleven, had not forgotten his previous rebuff. His manner was suspicious now, and as acrimonious as his

patient's. He declared, with asperity, that it was suicide for Lennard to dream of moving until he was stronger.

In his heart Lennard admitted this as common sense—he was infinitely feebler than he had made out—although he resigned himself to obey Archer grudgingly.

On the following two days he did his best to distract himself. Jones came down from New York, bringing correspondence, business news, and the recent books. But the news was boring and the books dull, and he was too fatigued to bother about correspondence, or sustain the gaiety of rackets visitors. In the end he was forced to acknowledge this adjacent personality which so evoked his antagonism. And since he could not avoid Mrs. Day, he determined to cultivate her. He had an idea, not without subtlety, that when he had fully fathomed her she would cease to irritate him.

That same afternoon he requested the nurse to convey his compliments to Mrs. Day and to ask her to see him if she had nothing better to do. She came, as he had anticipated, at once and,



with a change in his manner, which had been abrupt to the point of insolence, he declared:

"I'm so sorry to bother you but, as it happens, I'm feeling most frightfully glum. Would it annoy you to talk to me for a bit?"

She coloured, as she did so easily.

"I should only bore you."

He raised his eyebrows.

"How could you possibly think that?" She smiled.

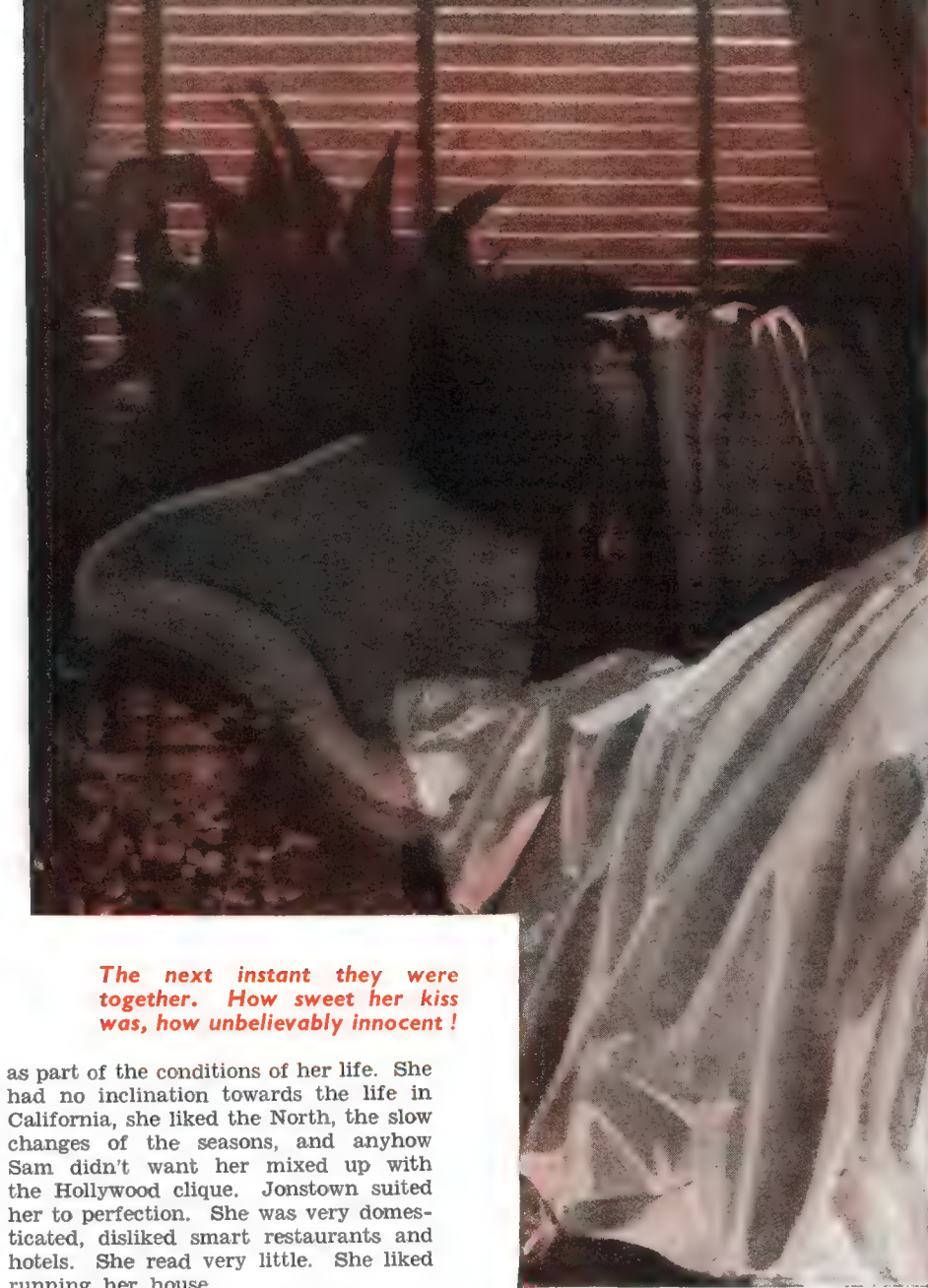
"You're so terribly clever and I'm so terribly dull." But she drew forward a chair and sat down by his bedside.

He exerted himself to be pleasant; and the result was immediate and naïve.

Hitherto she had confined herself to one courtesy visit in the day, but now, since he showed such signs of appreciating her society, she began to spend more and more time with him. She sat with him, talked, read aloud. She unfolded unsuspectingly under his attention. When he told her, with his tongue in his cheek, how well she read, she blushed like a young girl and answered artlessly that she had often read at home, in the old days, to her mother. At this, with deliberate malice, he pressed her to tell him about herself.

Her name, apparently, was Phœbe. And she was originally from Lerton, Michigan, where her father had been in practice—a small town lawyer. Listening gravely, Lennard had a vision of the frame house, the dilapidated buggy, of fudge parties and choir practices, of gawky youths and giggling girls in spotted muslin, exactly the background from which she must have sprung. At seventeen she had moved with the family to Milwaukee and there she had met and straightaway married Sam Day, insurance agent for the Fire and General. What a romance!—Lennard had to hold the rein tight upon his laughter as she guilelessly related how the tender flame had burned all these

years. Her eyes were kind as she spoke of Sam, he was so decent, so genuine and human, oh, well, he was just Sam, her husband, Sam. He'd got on marvellously, too, for a man comparatively uneducated. He'd been one of the first to foresee the future of the movies, had worked his way right into the front of the Vestris Corporation. Yes, they thought the world of Sam in the Vestris. He was from home a great deal, of course, on the coast, San Francisco, and other places, often for three months at a stretch. Naturally that was hard to put up with, but she accepted it now



*The next instant they were together. How sweet her kiss was, how unbelievably innocent!*

as part of the conditions of her life. She had no inclination towards the life in California, she liked the North, the slow changes of the seasons, and anyhow Sam didn't want her mixed up with the Hollywood clique. Jonstown suited her to perfection. She was very domesticated, disliked smart restaurants and hotels. She read very little. She liked running her house.

Her story touched the apex of the commonplace. As Lennard listened, he saw her as the perfect exemplar of all the humdrum virtues, the good woman of the Victorian story-book, sweet, industrious, faithful, and pure, a type he had hitherto believed more finally departed than the dodo.

"Of course," he suggested, masking his irony with a careful gravity, "your one sorrow is that you have no children."

Her eyes fell.

"Yes," she sighed. "That's our one regret."

It was too perfect, her unsuspecting response. Now the picture was complete. He had a sudden impulse, restrained only with difficulty, to shock her by some ribald jibe.

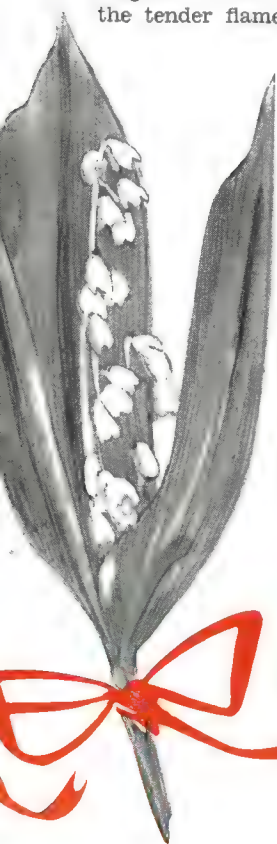
By the end of the week he was able to be up, and on the first day he could hobble out of doors she took him round her garden. He had prepared himself for pergolas and crazy paving, a concrete sundial with the usual pietic superscription: *You are nearer to God in a garden than anywhere else on earth*, and a bird bath on which the tom-tits might chirrup and produce guano. But the garden was natural and beautiful, watered by the clear, rushing mill-stream, to whose edges the soft lawns

came, full of flowering cherries and graceful birches, and banked by copses of feathery green pine.

"I've tried to keep it quite unspoiled." Her affection for the place was plain, and as they rounded a bend of the stream, reaching a lower level of the grounds, a marshy peninsula where, on the soggy land, a dozen men were busy, untrucking soil and rocks, a look of real pride came into her eyes.

"They're reclaiming it," she explained with a shy side glance at Lennard. "All that was swamp land, quite waste and useless. They're making it good where it was worthless before. It's a little scheme I have. I get these men from the Relief Organisation in New York. Every one of them was walking the streets, destitute, before he came here." She paused. "You see, we're trying to reclaim them too."

At this crowning example of her bourgeois charity he was viciously silent. They came back to the house and entered the terrace room where Rose, the maid, anticipating their return with characteristic devotion, had just brought in tea. Moodily, he told himself it was







*Under that kiss his bitter triumph died and all his affectation deserted him.*

all part of the pastiche, this quite touching loyalty on the part of the domestics.

Though the expedition had been short he felt played out, and his fatigue was visible in his face. From time to time Mrs. Day glanced at him with genuine concern. Something was on her mind. And at last, when tea was almost over, she took, it seemed, her courage in both hands. She said impulsively.

"Mr. Lennard, why don't you stop here a little longer?"

He stared at her, absolutely taken aback, speechless.

"You've had a dreadful shaking; you really aren't well yet," she continued frankly, persuasively. "You've just said you liked my garden. Why don't you stop on for a week or two and help me with it? Get some real exercise in the open, for a change. It would do you all the good in the world. You know, there isn't any doubt that if you return straightaway to New York you're going to get ill again. Dr. Archer was saying . . ." She broke off abruptly, gazing at him between confusion and entreaty.

He understood. His thin lip twisted in cynical amusement.

"You've been discussing me with our medical friend. He's full of melodramatic foreboding about what he calls my hectic mode of life."

"Oh, please. You mustn't talk that way. You've been so different lately I would like . . ."

"To reclaim me too," he interposed, with sardonic reference to her swamp land scheme. There was a pause. He surveyed her as she sat there, so earnest in her intention, her expression so ingenuous and sweet, her hazel eyes bent upon him so winningly. And all at once his hostility came to a head in one sudden and bitter determination. Why hadn't he thought of it before? It was the only way. He dropped his eyes, for fear she might read them. He replied in an even voice:

"You're kind, far too kind to me. And I dare say you're right. I do need a rest, a change, I need to be taken in hand by someone who might give me a better, a more normal outlook on life."

"You'll stop, then?" she exclaimed.

"Why, yes. . . . I'd love to stay here for a week or two. It's very lovely." His tone was logical, even diffident. "But really . . . your husband . . . wouldn't he . . . ?"

At first her bewilderment was almost comical; then she laughed outright.

"You don't understand. Why Sam wouldn't dream of objecting. Oh, it's too amusing."

"Yes," said Lennard gently. "Amusing is perhaps the word."

He stayed. That evening he rang up his apartment in New York. There

was a considerable business demanding his attention, a growing list of engagements, and innumerable inquiries as to his whereabouts. But he shelved everything. He asked merely for some things to be sent down, dismissing Jones's suggestion that the valet should come too. Nothing, he reflected with a smile, must interfere with the simplicities of his regeneration.

This began upon the following day. Despite his weakness it was clear that she meant to be as good as her word. With a serious air she led him across the terrace and introduced him to a pair of light clippers and the privet hedge which marked the boundary of the lawns.

"This wants trimming," she announced composedly. "You'll probably make an awful mess of it. But never mind, it makes an easy start."

He did not find it so easy, nevertheless, standing in the sun, working the clippers clumsily. Reaching for a cool drink in a long chair was his idea of garden exercise, but as the morning dragged on neither the drink nor the chair materialised. During that week he was more than once on the point of throwing up the whole affair. From the privet hedge he went on to shear some borders of box, a trying task, involving much painful recognition of his knees and back.

On Thursday she put him on the lawns where with increasing venom he pushed a mower to and fro, conscious of himself as a ridiculous figure in the old straw hat she had offered him as protection against the glaring sun. Only the thought of her ultimate humiliation held him to it. Images rose up in his mind and he dwelt upon them with grim satisfaction as he sweated behind the whirling machine. His hands grew blistered and his skin tanned, and at night he rolled uneasily in bed in the effort to ease the anguish of his unaccustomed muscles. But by Saturday

he was digging, actually digging, in the flower garden! Just after noon she came to him and stood watching, a faint smile on her lips.

"You're doing famously," she said at length. "But do be careful of my lily of the valley." He stared at the clump of unflowering green shoots, near which he had driven the spade. "They don't do well here," she added, "but for all that, they're my favourite flower."

"Your favourite?" he repeated, stung by the odd softness of her tone. "Why?"

There was a pause. She coloured under the directness of his ques-







tion, but with her usual frankness made no effort to evade it.

"Sam used to send me lily of the valley . . . when we first met. He still does occasionally . . . when he's missing me a lot. It's then I know how much Sam and I mean to each other. That's why it counts so much."

He made no answer, but in a sulky silence accompanied her in to lunch. Her tender, absurd association between the lily of the valley and her husband's love had grossly provoked him. He helped himself inordinately to fried chicken, herb stuffing, and sweet corn from the platter presented by Rose, then to home-grown potatoes, mashed and buttered as only Maggie, the Irish cook, knew how. His appetite was ravenous and the simple food delicious. Several times he came back for more. Never had anything tasted so good.

He sighed at last, and, raising his gaze from his plate, found hers bent quizzically upon him.

"Some more stuffing?" she suggested.

At the friendly humour in her tone his ill-temper left him. He had to laugh, a perfectly natural laugh, which startled

him by its spontaneity.

"A great improvement," she went on, not without a certain happy complacency. "It's good to hear you laugh like that. I wouldn't have believed it. You've really done marvellously."

He lit a cigarette and stretched luxuriously.

"Do I have to work on Saturday afternoons?"

She shook her head, smiling.

"It's the hired man's half-day. Would you like to come fishing?"

"Fishing?" he echoed, rather blankly.

They went, nevertheless, launching a punt on the lake lying in the nest of woods to the east of the property, a lovely stretch of water. He understood nothing of angling, but he saw plainly that she knew what she was doing. He lounged on the sun-baked thwarts, while the boat drifted down the willow-fringed shore, watching her cast the light split cane rod with a supple motion of her forearm. His mind was in a state of unusual quiescence, his senses soothed by the slow lapping of the water against the gunwale, by the play of light and shadow on the lake, the aromatic scents of pine

and birch. How young she looked! She was like a young girl. Her old bleached blouse, open at the neck, showed her sun-browned skin. The line of her hip was firm under the short linen skirt. In such surroundings the simile came easily to hand: she looked clean as the spring-fed lake and as free from artifice.

Though they talked little, the long afternoon passed quickly. She caught three fish, all good-sized bass, each over a pound.

"You shall have them for dinner to-night. Then you'll see how good they are." She added: "Dr. Archer is coming."

It annoyed him that the doctor should be there, yet the edge of his exasperation was no longer keen. He dressed carefully that night, feeling an exhilaration in his sun-drenched body. As he knotted his bow tie his reflection in the glass did not displease him. His eye was clear, his cheek brown, for the first time for years he looked fit.

"Making a man of yourself at last," he mocked his image, adding with cynical derision, "with the help of God and a good woman."

Archer, however, was solemnly of that opinion. After a quick, appraising glance, his manner towards Lennard was altogether less brusque, and into his small, sharp eyes came precisely that approval demanded of the melodrama. It might have afforded Lennard more prolonged amusement had he not been enjoying himself so much. The dinner was a success. The french windows of the long, cool room were open to the rushing mill stream. And the new moon rose above the old mill house and looked in upon them.

They were taking coffee in the terrace-room when an urgent 'phone call came for Dr. Archer. Though he gave no sign, a thrill went over Lennard. He murmured a polite regret as the old doctor rose grumblingly, promising to return later if he could, then surreptitiously he glanced at Mrs. Day as she sat, with head slightly averted towards the open window. It was an opportunity at last. Rising, he went over to the Steinway grand which stood in a raised embrasure at the top of the room.

"Do you play?" he asked, as though asking her permission.

She shook her head.

"No, I'm not nearly good enough. But I love it."

He sat down and, gazing directly towards her over the ebony surface of the grand piano, he began softly, almost idly to play. He was, unquestionably, a marvellous pianist; he had with the instrument the intimate assurance of a composer. The one shaded lamp on the piano threw his lean face, conspicuous above his black dinner clothes, into a queer brilliance. The rest of the room was shadowed.

A little sigh broke from her when he finished and she turned to him, entranced.

"That was lovely, lovely. I'd no idea you could play like that. Please, what was it?"

"Oh, something of my own. A little melody I'm thinking out for my next operetta."

It was clear that his negligent words



profoundly impressed her. A touch of awe was in her tone.

"How wonderful to have that gift! But you have so many gifts, Mr. Lennard."

"Why Mr. Lennard?" he laughed pleasantly. "Aren't we Gilbert and Phoebe to each other now?"

"Why, yes," she said slowly, "if you wish it . . . Gilbert."

He did not answer but, still holding her eyes, he began gently, almost caressingly, to play the *Liebestraum*. As the liquid notes melted through the quiet room she listened, enchanted, and when he finished an almost painful silence followed. He saw, with rising excitement, that her eyes were filled with tears.

"How lovely," she whispered at last. "It runs like the stream outside . . . on and on."

"It's the Dream of Love," he answered. "Liszt wrote it. And it does go on and on."

Silence again, an electric stillness. She was deeply moved, her face upturned towards him, her expression strangely bewitched. She had the look of a dove, unconsciously fascinated by some sinister and unknown force.

For a moment he kept his dark eyes upon her, then slowly he rose. But as he moved towards the settee whereon she sat, the door opened briskly and Archer walked back into the room.

"A false alarm," he announced, rubbing his hands. "I don't have to go after all. And now let's shoot some three-handed bridge."

Lennard's face made an ugly study. Willingly he would have shot the unsuspecting doctor.

Four days elapsed and Lennard tried hard but unsuccessfully to re-create in Mrs. Day the moment of emotion which had been so rudely shattered. His own intensity amazed him. Normally, the continued tedium of this country life must have driven him back frantically to the haunts of sophistication. It was ludicrous to imagine him a convert to the rustic ideal. Yet he remained, working in the garden, constantly in her company, professing eagerness in her tuition and exerting himself with all the force of his brilliant personality to please. Everything he had he concentrated skilfully to break down her reserves.

"You know," he remarked with apparent idleness. "Oh, forgive me for mentioning it—but it does strike one as rather queer . . . your hearing so little from your husband."

"Yes?" She smiled at him sideways with the utmost frankness. "Well, I don't think it strange. You see, I understand Sam. As a matter of fact I haven't heard from him since he left. No, not a word. But that doesn't make the slightest difference. Sam and I . . . oh, well . . . we mean everything to each other."

"The perfect marriage, eh?" The sneer escaped him.

"Why not?" she answered simply.

"But doesn't it ever strike you that Sam may be, well . . . shall I say, amusing himself, occasionally, on the coast?"

"Possibly," she said quite calmly. "But does it matter?"

During the next two days nothing of note took place, but on the evening following, the invitation to the dance arrived. It was no more than the usual monthly dance at the Country Club, but Lennard, his eyes upon the card as she tossed it aside, snatched at the opportunity.

"Would it compromise you if I came along?"

"What?" Her surprise was obvious. "This dance? Oh, really, you couldn't be bothered with a thing like that."

"I could . . . if you were there."

"But I hardly ever go," she protested. "I sometimes drop in for a hand of bridge."

"Please." He bent forward with only half-concealed eagerness. "I've been pretty good, haven't I? Doing everything you've asked. Now I'm asking this little thing of you. I want us to go to this dance. Don't interrupt. I haven't had any fun since I've been ill. Now I'm really well. I want us to have a celebration. It'll be my evening. I owe you something surely for what you've done for me."

"Oh, well. . . ." She temporised, feeling awkward, flattered, perhaps for the first time a little alarmed. But his manner of asking had made it impossible for her to refuse.

From the moment she agreed to go, he began to build up subtly on the dance. He made himself charming, attentive, gay. His manner infected her.

"It's perfectly absurd . . ." she remarked happily. "You keep on romancing about this dance and I haven't a rag to wear."

Struck by an idea, he replied instantly, his face alight:

"I should love to choose you a dress . . . brocade silk . . . a parchment shade . . . something really worthy of you."

Here normality intervened. She laughed as though he had made a funny remark.

"Don't tell me you add dress-designing to your other accomplishments."

Yet Lennard had no intention of dismissing the matter as a joke. That same evening he made private and prolonged use of the wire to New York and on the following afternoon a thin, dark woman arrived with an air of friendly and distinguished precision in a large, expensive automobile. Three dresses came with her.

Lennard had hoped to pass things off smoothly enough without disclosing the identity of this unexpected visitor—she was Madame Nina, from West 57th Street, who dressed most of his productions. But he was mistaken. After a moment of complete incredulity, Mrs. Day was hurt and angry. She refused to have anything to do with the dresses.

"How could you dream of taking such a liberty!" she declared with unusual vehemence.

Lennard pleaded,

excused himself, protested that he had not meant to offend her.

"I tell you I'm sorry," he muttered for the tenth time.

Then she perceived that he seemed genuinely upset. Her mood changed suddenly and a quick look of compunction clouded her eyes.

"Very well, then," she said in a softer tone. "Perhaps it's stupid to make such a fuss. Since she's here I'll see her. But if I choose one of those fabulously expensive models, I shall pay for it myself."

"Pay!" he echoed. "What on earth does that matter so long as you look beautiful?"

And at the blank logic of his tone the situation was suddenly reversed. She flushed faintly, then her eyes, searching his face in a kind of wonder, filled with apprehension and fell. Immediately the blood rushed from her cheeks. She turned and went upstairs as though retreating from him. Nothing more was said of the dress, even after Nina had taken her silent and slightly enigmatic departure.

The evening of the dance fell still and warm. He was ready early, and with unusual restlessness sat waiting by the wide windows of the terrace room, from which position he commanded a view of the inner hall and staircase. Every minute he kept glancing at the brass face of the old grandfather clock. His impatience made the measured beats of the swinging pendulum seem painfully slow. Frowning, he wondered if she could conceivably fail to come. All the day she had been rather strange, very silent and subdued. Indeed, he had not seen her since lunch time, and during that meal he had been conscious of a reserve in her manner almost anxiously directed against him. Lately he had even suspected that she was avoiding him.

At that moment, quickly, she came downstairs and through the hall towards him. She wore the dress his fancy had created for her, a French brocade of parchment grey, the skirts full and long, the bodice cut in a low plain sweep, from which her neck rose slenderly. Her beauty, now made fully manifest, her sense of youth and freshness, caught and intensified by the lovely dress, was greater far than he had expected. He rose and advanced to meet her.

"Why," he murmured, "you take my breath away."

She flushed. How easily she flushed now when he spoke to her! And then he saw that she was nervous. He had

never seen her so disturbed. She was pale and her hand trembled slightly as she pulled on her glove. The knowledge gave him a sudden elation, filled him with confidence, made him gay.

"Let's go now," he said, smiling. "I can't bear to miss a single dance."

They drove to the Club. It was not

*The garden was natural and unspoiled, watered by the stream, banked by pine*



remarkable—a sprawling mansion which incongruously attempted to reconcile its original neo-Gothic structure with some modern additions, rather like a dowdy woman who, in desperation, has bought herself a flashy hat. But the grounds were strung prettily with coloured electric lights. A great many people were there—the sweep of drive was jammed with parked cars, the dance floor filled with a hilarious crowd. Ordinarily the scene would have bored Lennard to death, but to-night he was only half-conscious of the bright, immaterial background, of numbers of people who greeted Mrs. Day affectionately, then shook him by the hand, of the curious, the flattering glances directed towards him.

And then he was dancing with her, holding her in his arms. She was not a practised dancer like he, yet she was extraordinarily light on her feet. The rhythm of the music beat sensuously. He talked to her as they danced, intimately. He used all his charm, his suavity, and gradually, almost unwillingly, he felt her respond. The slight resistance left her body. She smiled at him timidly.

"Are you enjoying this?" he murmured.

"You know I am."

They danced again and again. He brought her a glass of champagne, but she refused it. And then as they stood on the edge of the open portico he said:

"I'm sorry I must go away to-morrow."

Watching her narrowly, he saw the piteous light that flashed into her eyes. "To-morrow!" she gasped.

He nodded his head, filled by a sense of bitter triumph. He knew now that the end of his long pursuit was in sight.

"Are you sorry?"

A silence.

"Yes."

He reached out and took her hand. And then, as they stood there, the band broke softly into the hit number from his last year's show, *Spanish Highway*. It was a haunting tune. She looked at him with dimmed eyes.

"We must dance this," she whispered.

Together they swung out upon the cool, softly lighted veranda. He felt that it was the moment.

"Of course you know," he said in a low voice, "that I love you."

At first he thought she had not heard. She did not answer. Then he became aware of the trembling of her body. They continued to dance, instinctively, as though floating in some strange air, but when the music ceased she said stiffly, with averted head:

"I think I want to go home now."

They drove back in dead silence under a great moon which filled the night with a white and dewy lustre. After the loud brightness of the Club the quiet of the house came like a caress. He entered the terrace-room, which was filled by the magic mist of the all-permeating moonshine. She stood in the doorway, outlined against the lighted hall, exquisitely steeped in silver and shadow, like a portrait by Whistler. Not looking at him, as if just about to go upstairs she said:

"You'll have a drink before you turn in?"

He held out his two hands towards her with a practised gesture.

"You heard what I said, didn't you? I adore you."

Instinctively she pressed her hand to her side. There was a long pause while the mill stream sang distantly, then slowly her fluttering eyelids lifted. She took a step into the room. The door swung shut behind her. She whispered brokenly:

"And the awful thing is . . . that I love you too."

The next instant they were together, his lips against hers. How sweet her kiss was, how unbelievably innocent! Under that kiss his bitter triumph died and all his affectation deserted him. His heart contracted with unbelievable emotion. Upon the low couch she clung to him like a child, white and defenceless, surging with the impulse of her own surrender. Through tears she repeated blindly, again and again:

"I love you. Darling, I love you. Nothing matters but that . . . nothing . . . nothing."

He did not move, but remained like a man stunned by some fantastic thunderbolt. With inconceivable poignancy he knew that he loved her, that for the first time in his bored, artificial life, cluttered with innumerable tawdry affairs and neurotic experiences, he had fallen deeply and genuinely in love. He had begun by desiring her from malice, but now the paradox was inverted and it was love which finally restrained him. He shivered faintly. It was an emotion greater than any he had ever known.

As she lay in his arms, quieter, he could feel her gratitude, her happiness.

"We must go right away," she whispered. "We can't wait here, in this house. We'll get away to-morrow. Oh, you love me, don't you, darling?"

"You know I do," he answered in a low voice.

"Then we'll begin to live." She gave a little sob. "Oh, I can't help myself. Don't think I don't know what I'm doing, darling. Nothing matters if we are together."

"Nothing."

"I'm so happy," she whispered. "I never knew such happiness could be. When I think of the future I could cry for joy. Oh, you're so sweet to me, darling. Oh, you've changed so much."

He stroked her hair gently, mastering the hurt her words gave him. He knew he had not changed. He would never change. In one devastating flash the

glory slipped from her romantic vision and he was confronted by bare reality. In that moment he looked into his own soul. Fundamentally, he was quite worthless. This idealism was momentary. The phase would pass. He would tire of her, yes, he would break her heart, bring her not happiness but eternal sorrow. Well, why not, he thought with sudden defiance. Life was like that surely. You took what sweets were offered and threw the bitterness away.

"Why are you so quiet, darling?"

"Thinking of all the things we'll do together," he answered tenderly.

It was late when she left him, kissing him lightly before she slipped from his arms and vanished upstairs.

He sat for a long time when she had gone, his thin face lit by the afterglow of her presence. At last he rose and went to his room.

Next morning he was down early. He entered the breakfast-room and, as he had expected, she was there. She smiled as he entered and shyly held up her face. He kissed her.

"Did you sleep well?" she asked, when she had given him coffee.

"Pretty fair." He smiled at her intimately. "Did you?"

She shook her head gaily.

"I was too happy, thinking so much of our going away, making plans, and so forth."

He laughed and helped himself to marmalade.

"I've been all worked up about it, too. Had to take a run round before breakfast to cool off."

"Darling!"

Five minutes later Rose, the maid, entered. She carried a long parcel under her arm.

"It just came by special messenger, ma'am," she announced. "From New York, he said."

Mrs. Day stared at the parcel. She was perhaps a trifle puzzled, even resentful of this intrusion into her state of dreamy rapture. But when Rose had gone she stripped the wrappings from the box and lifted the lid. Then a little cry of sheer distress broke from her lips.

"Sam!" she gasped. The box was filled to the brim with lovely lilies of the valley.

Her gaze remained fixed upon the exquisitely pure flowers for what seemed an eternity of time, then she turned and faced him. She was breathing quickly and her eyes were filled with tears. She pressed her hands together.

"From Sam," she repeated in a tormented voice. "To think he should send them to-day. . . . If it had been anything else . . ." And then, desperately, as she broke into scalding tears: "Leave me, darling . . . just for a little. I'll be all right . . . but I want to think . . . to think . . . about Sam. . . ."

An hour later Lennard left for New York, alone. The same day he cancelled all his American arrangements and booked his solitary passage on the *Berengaria*, which sailed for Southampton that night. But before he left he permitted himself a sentimental little pilgrimage. He went in person to the florist's in Park Avenue to pay for the lily of the valley.





# The BECK LODGE CASE

NO one at Beck Lodge really regretted the death of Major Bird, although they were naturally horrified by the manner of it. He had been a cantankerous, miserly, unsocial creature and abominably ill-mannered. Even Miss Camfer—one of those nice, well-meaning, elderly ladies who try, often misguided perhaps, to be kind to everyone they meet—found it difficult to profess any sincere regret for the Major's removal from the life of Beck Lodge.

It was a fair-sized house of two floors, at the back of Bridgmouth, and one of its chief attractions as a *pension* was an unusually large garden enclosed by a ten-foot wall. This garden extended from Potton Road, on to which Beck Lodge faced, right across to Fender's Lane. At this end, most remote from the house, there was a cottage, originally intended for a gardener, but now called the Annexe.

Major Bird was the only occupant this Annexe had ever had. He had come to Beck Lodge soon after George Comble had started this new venture, eleven years earlier, and had immediately decided to live in this converted cottage. He had taken the whole of it, a big bedroom upstairs, made by converting two rooms into one, and a sitting-room and bathroom (formerly the kitchen) on the ground floor. He paid only £4 a week for everything, including all his meals up at the house—easy terms, but he had been a hard bargainer, and Comble had been glad, then, of the certainty of £200 a year coming in all the year round. He had not at that time foreseen that his boarding-house was of the kind that attracted "permanencies." But it had. At the time of his murder, Major Bird was the doyen of the place, but Miss Camfer, who had been there for ten years, was a good second.

As soon as I had looked over the place, I saw that it was going to be a difficult job. There was a hard gravel path from the garden door of the house down to the Annexe, and after the dry weather, it was useless to look there for footprints. Moreover, it seemed fairly certain on the face of it that the mur-

derer had not come from the house, for the original "front door" of the cottage gave on to Fender's Lane, and while this door was unlocked the other was not, the key being found on the Major's bedside table.

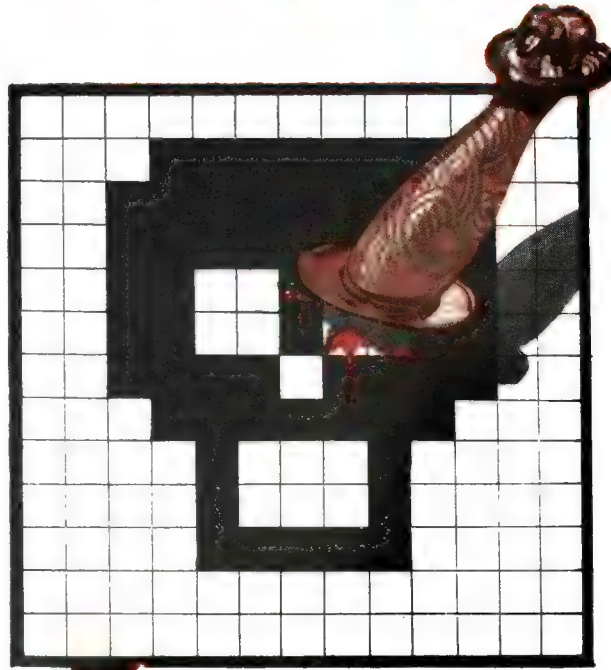
The crime had not been discovered till after nine o'clock. The Major was never called in the morning. There were gas and water laid on in the Annexe, and he did everything for himself, and always turned up at the house sharp at 8.30 for breakfast. His habits were so regular that when he had not appeared by nine o'clock on this particular morning, George Comble sent a maid down the garden to see if anything was wrong; and when she returned to say that the door was locked inside and she could not make anyone hear, George went down himself. He found that all the windows on the ground floor were fastened, and

then, on the off-chance, got a pair of steps, climbed over the wall into the lane at the back, and so discovered that the door on that side was not locked. Naturally, after that he went upstairs, and what he saw made him come out and telephone at once to the police. He was wise enough to leave everything as he found it. He assured me that he hadn't touched a thing.

There was no question as to the manner of death. The Major had been stabbed through his pyjamas with a wicked-looking Indian dagger that had been driven in up to the hilt and left in the wound. It had gone deep into the heart, and there was very little blood on the Major's pyjama jacket. It was an almost certain inference that the murderer, himself, would not have been stained by blood. As for the dagger, there was no mystery in that connection. It was the Major's own, one of half a dozen; and it had been taken from the trophy that decorated one wall of the sitting-room below.

And I may as well say at once that not a finger-print, except the Major's own, was found on a blessed thing anywhere in the cottage—the hilt of the dagger, the key on the table by the bed, the door handles, light switches, anything. The murderer must either have worn gloves, or cleaned up everything he had touched before he left.

The next snag was the question of motive, which was not apparently robbery, for on that table by the bed were a valuable gold watch, a note-case containing six pounds in treasury notes, and thirteen shillings in silver. It was, by the way, a well-filled table, as in addition to these things, there were a complete apparatus for making tea, a loaded revolver, an alarm clock set at 7.15, some books, a block of foolscap paper, and a pencil. The reason for this accumulation was obvious enough, as the Major had been badly smashed up in 1918 and had had both legs off just below the knee. He got about fairly well with two artificial legs and a stick, but once he was in bed it meant a lot of trouble to get out to fetch anything.



by

J. D. BERESFORD

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
T. GRAINGER JEFFREY

*It took a crossword puzzle expert to find the clues in the mysterious murder of Major Bird*



## The Beck Lodge Case

So far, there was not a thing to get hold of. The Major certainly had been the kind of man many people would dislike, but not enough to murder him. And if it had not been for one solid piece of evidence, I should have thought it a pretty hopeless case. As it was, it seemed almost certain that P.C. George Churt had actually seen the murderer round about the time the crime was committed.

Medical evidence had fixed the Major's death as being somewhere about three o'clock, with a margin of error of perhaps two hours either way. Well, Churt's beat had taken him past the road in front of the cottage at two o'clock a.m., and he had seen a stranger in the sitting-room. The blind had not been drawn, and the bottom sash of the window was thrown right up—it was a warm night, and Churt had seen a fairly tall man, "getting on for six feet," he thought, leaning against the mantelpiece, smoking a cigarette. Churt had had a good look at him. He had only recently come on that beat, and although he knew that the cottage was an annexe of Beck Lodge, he did not know that only Major Bird inhabited it. Nevertheless, on other nights the place had always been shut up, and Churt had shown enough curiosity to stop a moment and look in. The man was dressed in a tweed jacket with loose grey flannel trousers and brown shoes, the ordinary wear of the seaside visitor, and Churt could not describe his face. The room had been lighted only by a shaded reading-lamp set on a table in the middle of the room and only the stranger's legs had been fully illuminated. Moreover, Churt had seen them through the open lower sash, and the upper part of the man's figure, besides being in comparative darkness, was further obscured by being seen through two panes of glass.

Naturally, I set the usual machinery in motion to try to discover the identity of the stranger, and played my own small part in it by cross-examining George Comble, who could only tell me that so far as he knew the Major had no acquaintance of any sort. He was a surly, solitary sort of man, who did not make friends. But if this fellow we were looking for was not known to the man he had, presumably, stabbed, what could he have been doing at two o'clock in the morning, smoking in the sitting-room of the cottage? For whether he was only planning the crime or had recently committed it, he would surely not deliberately expose himself to public observation.

I left that problem for the moment, however, and got busy with the obvious things that had still to be done. I had to go through the Major's effects and try to find out something of his private life, and, also, to interview everyone who had slept in Beck Lodge that night.

I need not describe the latter duty in detail. There were only three people who gave me any information that could conceivably have any bearing on my investigation. The first of these was old Colonel Bayliss, who had loathed the Major like poison, for no particular reason so far as I could gather, and told me that, in his opinion, there was something uncommonly suspicious about

his way of life, that he had some secret occupation of which he never spoke to anyone, and had all his letters delivered by the postman direct to the cottage so that no one in the house should ever see so much as the address on the envelopes. Old Bayliss was violently prejudiced, of course, but I made a note to check up on the little peculiarity he had indicated.



**The Major was a cantankerous, miserly, unsociable creature with abominable manners.**

The next witness was Mr. Hinkson, a neat, intelligent little man—he could not have been much over five feet high—a good bridge and chess player, a great favourite in the boarding-house though he had been there only a few months, and had even won the Major's tolerance so far as to be allowed to play an occasional game of chess with him. However, I got nothing from him, except a confirmation of Colonel Bayliss's suspicion that the Major had had some occupation of which he never spoke to anyone. "I have no idea what it could have been," Mr. Hinkson told me; "he often seemed to have difficulty in finding time for a game of chess, and I don't think he was a great reader."

The third witness was Miss Camfer, who wasted a lot of my time telling me how sorry she was that poor Major Bird should have come to such a terribly sudden end. "He was not a companionable person, I admit," she said. "In fact, he was quite rude sometimes when one only wanted to be a little friendly and kind to him. But I'm sure that it wasn't, in a way, altogether his fault, Inspector. I feel positive that he must have had some great disappointment that had soured him." And so on. Indeed, all the occupants of Beck Lodge were willing to talk at any length about the late Major Bird. They had not liked him, but he had greatly piqued their curiosity.

The only thing I got from Miss Camfer, which might be of interest, was that she, alone, had been wakened on the night of the murder. She was uncertain of the time, though she thought it might have been about three or four o'clock, but she had dreamt that the house was on fire and declared that she had wakened right up and smelt burning

rubber. "I thought at once, you know, that it must be the electric-light wires," she explained. "And I meant to get up and go out into the passage. But I suppose I must have been terribly sleepy, for the next thing I knew was Kate's knocking at the door with my morning tea. And wasn't it curious? the first thing I said when she came into the room was to ask if there'd been a fire in the house—just as if I must have been somehow thinking of it in my sleep all the time."

If it had not been for that last piece of psychological evidence, I should have taken little notice of this story. But it is true that an urgent impulse of this kind, suddenly submerged by the failure of consciousness whether in sleep or under an anæsthetic, will generally be the first concern of the subject when normal consciousness returns. Wherefore, as I did not consider Miss Camfer capable of knowing or inventing that corroborative detail, I thought it probable that she certainly had been wakened at some time in the night by the smell of burning.

I could not, however, get any confirmatory evidence from George Comble or the servants. There were, apparently, no signs of rubber having been burnt in any of the bedrooms that night. As the month was August, there were, of course, no fires laid, and ashes or the sticky residue of burnt rubber would have been easily detected.

My next investigation was directed to the examination of the Major's papers. His keys had been found under his pillow, and that fact, and the revolver on the bedside table, made me suspect that he had some valuable property that he was anxious to guard, a suspicion that led me in the first place to turn out the heavy, old-fashioned safe that occupied a corner of his sitting-room.

The result of that examination was interesting and quite unexpected. In the first place, there was neither money nor valuables in the safe, and at first sight it seemed from an examination of the paying-in and cheque book counterfoils that the Major's money affairs had been of the simplest. He had a pension of £423 2s. 6d. net after deduction of income tax, and drew a cheque for £7 every Friday. The last cheque had been drawn on the previous day and the £6 13s. 0d. found on his bedside table represented, no doubt, the balance of the cash he had received from the bank. (His account with George Comble, I learnt, was always settled after breakfast on Saturday morning.) And the paying-in book showed that no money other than these quarterly amounts of £105 15s. 8d. was ever deposited in the bank.

So far it was simple enough. The Major was evidently living just within his means and putting little or nothing by; but the examination of various correspondence and agreements found in the safe showed that he had another and apparently profitable source of income, none of which was shown in his banking account or, it may be presumed, in his income tax return.

The secret of the Major's life was not as romantic as any of the suggestions made to me by the residents in Beck





**The wicked-looking Indian dagger had been driven in up to the hilt. It had gone deep into the heart and there was very little blood spilt.**

Lodge, but it was at least unusual. He was revealed, in fact, as a composer of cross-word puzzles, and I found that he was a regular contributor to several London papers, including one whose cross-word I, myself, tackled every Sunday morning. Curiously enough, it had occurred to me once or twice that the composer must have had rather a pessimistic turn of mind. I did not, however, spend much time in reflecting on the odd mental relation that had existed between the Major and myself, but turned my attention to the problem of what he had done with the money he received from his employment. So far as I could calculate, from the material before me, he must have been receiving about £10 a week from this source, none of which was accounted for in his dealings with the bank.

I was still worrying my brains over this when I came across one letter that threw a little light upon the conundrum. This letter was from the accountancy department of a well-known newspaper syndicate, and was to the effect that the Accountant regretted his error in paying "Mr. Major Bird" by cheque, and now enclosed £18 in notes to settle the account due.

So the explanation of why the Major's receipts under this head did not appear in his bank-book was simple enough. He had cheated the Revenue by concealing the true amount of his income. The next thing was to find out what he had done with the money he received in cash for composing his puzzles. There was no sign of a second banking account; nor in any of the papers I found in the safe and later in his writing-desk, the least indication that he had invested the money anywhere. The remaining solution seemed to be that he had kept it all in his safe, a probability supported by the observations that he had slept with the keys of the safe under his pillow and a loaded revolver by the side of his bed.

Well, here was a likely clue to the motive for his murder. If anyone knew that the Major had what I calculated might amount to four or five thousand pounds in notes on the premises, the object of the crime was just robbery. The difficulty was to discover who would have been likely to have known that all that money was in the house.

But though I went through the cottage with a fine sieve and an analytical mind, that afternoon and evening and all the next day—incidentally, a Sunday—I found but one tiny fragment of what might possibly, however remotely, serve as evidence. This discovery was in the Major's waste-paper basket. It was fairly well filled and the contents would, I learnt from Comble, almost certainly have been burnt later if the Major had survived, as no waste-paper was ever taken from the Annexe, and the maids had often complained in the summer months of the mess of burnt paper in the Major's grate. He was evidently taking no chances of his occupation being discovered, and had shown a masterly attention to detail.

The basket on this occasion was about half full, chiefly of letters either in criticism or praise of the Major's ingenuity in the composition of his clues—such



## The Beck Lodge Case

letters, as I gathered from the envelopes, having been forwarded to him under cover from the newspaper offices. I noticed, also, in this connection, that he had assumed a kind of rough pseudonym, as the two envelopes I found were addressed to "Major Bird Esqre." All these letters had just been torn once across, and I wondered if the Major had even troubled to read them.

The one scrap that I found and preserved out of all this was the top left-hand corner of a cross-word puzzle torn from a journal that I recognised by the type and texture as being one of those to which the Major was a contributor. It was a very small piece that had got tucked away in a fold of one of the letters, and I should have missed it if I had not gone so carefully over every bit of paper in the basket. The puzzle had been filled in in pencil, and all that was left were the letters P, L, and part of what might have been an E on the "across" lights and most of an R under the P, reading down.

These pencilled letters had not been filled in by the Major, himself, as I had found plenty of examples of his work in the desk, and his block-lettering was commonplace and clumsy, whereas this had a very distinctive, rather artistic character. But the point that really piqued my curiosity was what had become of the rest of the puzzle from which this had been torn? For I was able to identify it, later, as having appeared in a daily paper on the morning of the day on which the Major was murdered, and I could think of no reason why he should have at once destroyed the remainder of this particular puzzle when his waste-paper basket was full of much stronger evidence of his occupation. Moreover, how did this one scrap come to be mixed up with a letter that had been written before the journal in question was published? But as to the particular copy of the paper from which the puzzle had been torn, I could get no further information, as the journal in question was not taken regularly either by the Major or by any of the boarding-house residents.

Well, these were all the clues I had to help me, and a week later, spent chiefly in checking up on various inferences I had drawn, I was no farther forward. All the details of the Major's deception were fully confirmed. I was able to get particulars and some figures from the papers to which he had contributed, all of which had had to submit to his demand for payment in notes, the reason he had given being that he had no banking account, and found great difficulty in getting cheques cashed. None of his newspaper employers had ever seen him.

Meanwhile, there was no further record of the stranger who had been seen in the sitting-room. He had made a clean get-away—not a difficult task if he had had a car somewhere in the neighbourhood. Beck Lodge was right at the back of the town, one of the old houses that had been built before Bridgmouth became a popular watering-place, and a car could easily have been parked a mile or two out in the country. The chances of it, or its owner, being seen in the small hours of the morning were

very remote. Of course, the local police made a thorough investigation, but not a clue of any sort was forthcoming.

Moreover, the more I thought about that observation of Churt's, the more certain I became that there must have been a deliberate motive for that frank exposure in the cottage sitting-room. A man in those circumstances does not pull

been the work of a stranger.

And from that I began to wonder whether other red herrings might not have been drawn across the trail. For instance, could the plain implication that the Annexe had been entered from the back road and not from the *pension* garden have been a fake? The implication was a peculiarly pointed one, be-



up the blind, open the window, and stand where he can be seen from the road. And what other motive could he have had than that of laying a false trail? There was one flaw in this reasoning, and it was that the lane faced by the cottage was on the edge of open country and completely deserted at that time of night. If this were a trick, then it could only have been planned by one who had known that a police patrol passed that way about two o'clock in the morning.

Indeed, every feature of the case pointed to the crime having been committed by someone who was thoroughly conversant with the Major's circumstances, employment, habits, and secrets. The leaving of that £6 13s. 6d. on the table might be interpreted as another instance. If the murderer had meant to suggest that the motive was *not* robbery, he would not take away money that could be certainly inferred to have been in the Major's possession, since he went to the bank every Friday, and paid his bill to Comble on Saturday morning. It seemed to me, in short, quite impossible that the murder and robbery could have

cause except by going through the Annexe the only ways of reaching the lane at the back of the *pension* from the main road at the front were by a circuit of nearly a mile through the town, by scaling a ten-foot wall topped with broken glass, or by passing through private property, none of them tempting to anyone who did not want to be seen.

If I was up against the wiles of a clear-sighted and ingenious criminal, it seemed fairly certain that the clear inference he had meant me to draw was that the murder could not have been committed by anyone living in the *pension*. Had I fallen too easily into that trap? Suppose, for instance, that the criminal had had a duplicate key of the garden-door of the Annexe? No



## J. D. Beresford

such key was known to exist by George Comble, but anyone who had access to the Annexe could have taken an impression of the Major's key and had a duplicate made. And although there were inside bolts to the front door of the cottage, there was none at the back.

I had a strong feeling for the first time since I had undertaken the case that I was on the right track. And yet, when I tried to follow it up, I was confronted with a blank wall.

For what member of the Beck Lodge household could I possibly suspect? Of the men, there was George Comble himself, a little short for the height estimated by P.C. Churt, and on other counts, as I believed, above suspicion. Next

except Miss Camfer, could have carried off that disguise, and she—to put it bluntly—had neither the brains nor the character to plan and execute an elaborately camouflaged crime. But the more I racked my brains, the less probability did I see of the murder having been committed by Comble, Colonel Bayliss, Greatorex, Hinkson, or Fuller. Of them all only Comble came anywhere near the physical description of the stranger seen in the Major's sitting-room. Comble, also, had known the Major longer than anyone else in the place and might conceivably have been in his confidence. Finally, he was the most likely person to have a duplicate key of the Annexe. But what could

convinced I became that it had a peculiar significance. It must have been dropped into the basket on the day of the murder, and if the whole puzzle had been there, I might have found an explanation for its being where I found it. The Major had been down to the bank that morning, and might have been given the completed puzzle by someone he had met—though for his own good reasons the Major never talked cross-words to anyone or showed the least interest in them. But why should one corner only have been put in the basket and the rest destroyed?

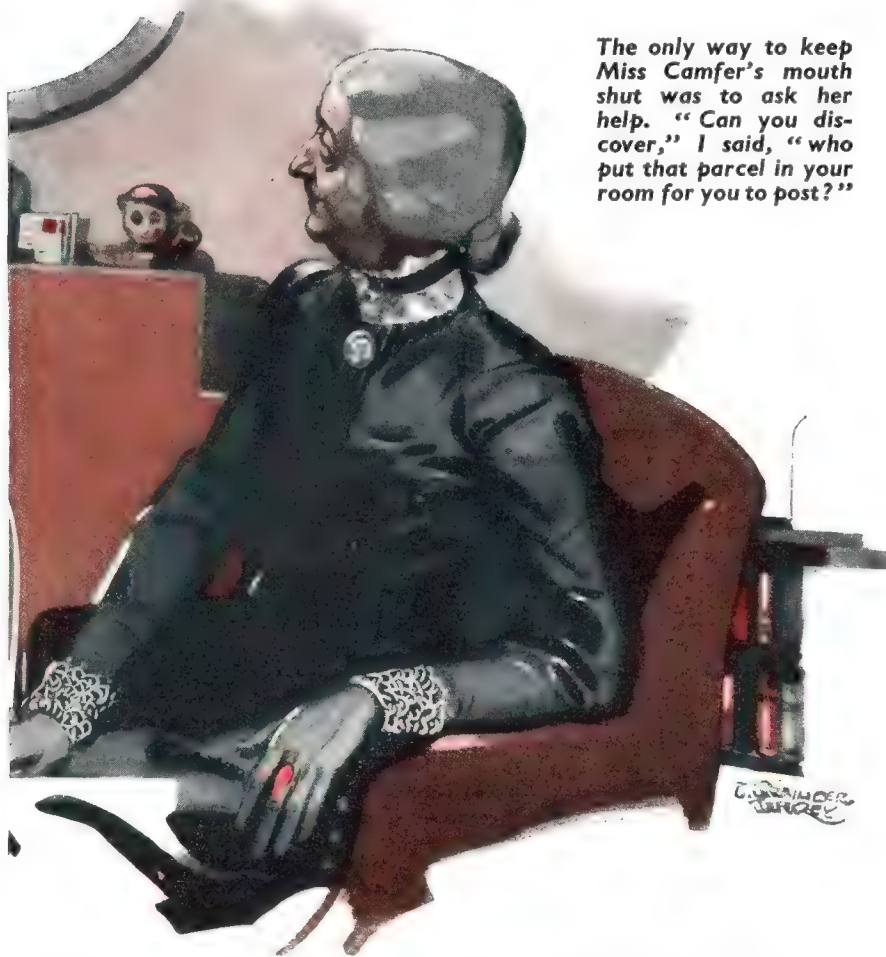
Well, I decided to ride my hunch that the murderer was to be found among the residents in Beck Lodge, even though there was not one particle of evidence against a single one of them. And by way of a beginning, I resorted to a trick, which was to tell Comble that I should have to go through the house room by room. I deeply regretted, of course, to have to upset the place, but my duty had to be done, however unpleasant it might be to him or to me. He might warn his boarders, I told him, but none of them must leave the place or take anything out before I had searched the house.

I was really sorry for Comble. Naturally, he said the whole idea was absurd, that it was utterly impossible for anyone in the house to have killed the Major, and wanted to argue the evidence with me. But our work often compels us to do unpleasant things, and I was brutally firm with poor George.

As a matter of fact, I had no intention of going minutely through the house, room by room. If I had sized up the intellectual capacity of the man I was up against, he was not the kind to leave any clue lying about. No, what I wanted was to give him a scare, and hurry him up a little in the development of his plans for getting rid of those five or six thousand pounds in Bank of England notes. For although that form of currency in the lower denominations of £1 and 10s. notes is easy enough to spend piecemeal, it would be by no means easy to conceal its possession in bulk, or to get rid of it in a single sum. It would be impossible to hide it in the house, and to pay it into a bank or attempt to find a *cache* for it either in the garden or the neighbourhood would be uncommonly risky, especially with the kind of watch that was now to be kept on the residents of Beck Lodge.

That detail, by the way, was an essential part of my scheme, and before giving my warning to Comble, I had had a couple of plain-clothes men to keep an eye on the place; and had told them that they need not be at any great pains to disguise their presence. What I wanted to do was to scare my prey into immediate action, if, that is to say, he was there to be scared.

My next precaution was to tackle the problem of the post offices. There were only two in Bridgmouth, the General in the centre of the town and a branch kept by a stationer and newsagent about a quarter of a mile from Beck Lodge. At the General I had a watch kept at the entrance by policemen on point duty who knew all the Beck Lodge residents by sight, and my instructions were that



*The only way to keep Miss Camfer's mouth shut was to ask her help. "Can you discover," I said, "who put that parcel in your room for you to post?"*

there were Colonel Bayliss, about the right height, but very stout and the owner of a heavy white moustache that would have been difficult to hide; Mr. Greatorex, a retired Indian Civil Servant, crippled with rheumatoid arthritis; Mr. Hinkson, nearly a foot too short; and Mr. Fuller, a rather feeble-minded octogenarian. The women residents were Miss Camfer, who was tall and might conceivably have disguised herself in man's attire; Mrs. Greatorex, a faded little woman of sixty or so; Mr. Fuller's daughter, a stout spinster of about the same age; Mrs. Porter, the lady-housekeeper; and three maid-servants.

Well, I began by ruling out all the women on the list. None of them,

have been his motive? If he had been in great straits for money, he might have been tempted, but I knew that he was not. His boarding-house was doing very well and the manager of the bank, whom I interviewed, told me in confidence that Comble's account was in a very satisfactory condition and that he had been putting by money for years. And then, what finally ruled him out, in my judgment, was the fact that it was not he who had filled in that fragment of the cross-word puzzle I had found in the waste-paper basket. I had seen a specimen of his work in that connection and his block-lettering was of an entirely different character.

And the more I reflected over that queer little bit of evidence, the more



any parcel posted by one of them was to be held up until I had seen it. At the branch office, Mr. Letts, the proprietor, was familiar with all the people I had to keep under observation, so no watch was necessary outside the shop. But I did not think it likely, in any case, that that post office would be used.

In that deduction, however, I was mistaken, for on the very first morning that I began my search of the house, I received a telephone message from the stationer's asking me to come round. Nothing else was said, as I had impressed upon Mr. Letts the need for great caution. I received the message soon after eleven, but I did not go round to the post office until lunch time. I had a feeling that I, too, might be under surveillance.

The parcel that had been kept back for me weighed just over seven pounds. It was apparently a box, about nine inches by six and a quarter by six inches deep, wrapped in brown paper, not registered or sealed with wax—in fact, a thoroughly commonplace-looking parcel. But what made my heart leap with a sudden bound of triumph was the fact that it was addressed in block-lettering, and although I guessed that even that was disguised, done possibly with the left hand, I knew at once that whoever had written that address had filled in the fragment of the cross-word puzzle I had found in the Major's waste-paper basket. The address was: O. Playfair, 13 Richmond Avenue, S.E.27, with "To be called for" at the top.

It was not until I had grasped these particulars that I asked who had posted the parcel. As I put the question I looked forward to the answer with a very lively curiosity, but when I received the reply my heart sank.

For the parcel had been posted by Miss Camfer, and I felt quite sure in my own mind that she was not the murderer of Major Bird. However, I took the parcel into Mr. Letts's sitting-room above the shop and opened it there in his presence.

It contained Bank of England notes for £2,284 10s., neatly and closely packed, and not a single word of writing.

Well, I was on a hot scent now, and despite my suspicion of another red herring having been drawn across the trail, I had little doubt that I was within reasonable distance of running down my quarry.

The next step was obviously to interrogate Miss Camfer, and I told her after lunch that I should be greatly obliged if she could give me five minutes in Mr. Comble's private room, as I thought she might be of great help to me. She fairly beamed her agreement.

If there was one thing more than another that pleased Miss Camfer, it was to be asked for her help in anything. Indeed, she was plainly disappointed when she discovered that all I had

to ask her was whether she had posted a parcel that morning.

"Oh! yes; one, Inspector," she said. "I found it all done up and properly stamped."

"Found it?" I inquired.

"Yes, it had been left in my room," she explained. "And as I often post things for people, I just took it."

"Is there anyone in particular that you post parcels for?" I asked.

"Well, Mr. Greatorex, mostly," she told me. "But I sometimes post parcels for old Mr. Fuller, too."

"I see," I said, though I saw no particular prospect of getting much more from this source, and then, "Well, I'm very grateful to you, Miss Camfer, and I wonder if you would mind doing one other thing for me; that is to discover, if you can, who put that parcel in your room this morning?"

That may seem to have been a deadly mistake on my part, but short of locking Miss Camfer in her own room, there would have been no way of keeping her tongue quiet. Also, I was anxious to get off at once to the police station and put through a call to the Yard asking them to get on the trail of 13 Richmond Avenue, West Norwood, and anything that was to be learnt of O. Playfair.

I got through before three o'clock and asked for a preliminary report to be posted to me that evening and expressed. After that I decided, since the chase was now fairly up, to keep a man outside Beck Lodge all night.

I received the preliminary report I asked for at 7.30 the next morning, and the first page told me nothing more than that 13 Richmond Avenue was a boarding-house kept by a Mrs. Price (with various other details which, as it happened, were of no importance), that a Mr. O. Playfair had stayed there for ten days in November last, had left no address when he went away, and that no letters or parcels had come for him since. At that point, I began to wonder whether I was any farther forward, but the next sentence set my head spinning. "The O. Playfair in question," the report continued, "was a very small man, little if anything over five feet high. . . ."

Little Hinkson! Never once had it crossed my mind to suspect him, though now that I had the clue I realised that he was the only resident of Beck Lodge who could have had the brains to lay those false clues and carry the thing through without, almost without, a mistake.

Well, I could not get a warrant for his arrest on the evidence I had so far, but I meant to have it somehow in the course of the day, and I went straight up to Beck Lodge and took Comble partly into my confidence at once. I was going through Hinkson's room that day, and meanwhile I could take him down to the police court for the ostensible purpose of getting him to give some account of himself.

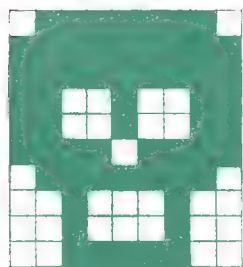
It was not yet eight o'clock, and I was still talking to Comble when one of the housemaids came in to tell him that the hot water she had left outside Mr. Hinkson's door, which was locked, had not been taken in and she could get no answer from him. We had the door open within five minutes, and I shouldn't



have been greatly surprised to find a dead body inside, but the room was empty. It seemed that I had not yet plumbed the cunning of that little man.

There was no difficulty in tracing his means of exit. The garden door of the house was unlocked, as was, also, the garden door of the cottage, the latter by a new key which had been left behind—I had the old one in my pocket.

I had no doubt, however, that we should have Mr. Hinkson in custody within twenty-four hours. So small a man is an easy mark. But in that I was mistaken, for we got no news of him of any sort for five days, and then it was nothing more than a guess, though later evidence showed that it was a right one. This guess was that the neatly dressed woman who had been one of the three passengers to travel by the first bus from Potton (a small town five miles inland), to Bridgmouth, was in fact the person for whom we were in search. Hinkson had taken a valise with him (containing, no doubt, among other things, the balance of the notes he had got from the Major's safe), but he had almost certainly disguised himself before he left the house in clothes that he must have had with him all the time he had been staying there. He had picked up the bus at a quarter past seven about a quarter of







***That connection enabled us to track the combination to Vienna, where an Austrian police officer was shot and an English detective badly wounded.***

a mile this side of Potton, gone to Bridgmouth station, and taken the 8 o'clock train to town. After that we could trace him no farther. He would have been perfectly disguised as a woman, with his neat-featured, fresh-complexioned face and absurdly small hands and feet.

Well, he had been a step ahead of me all the way, but he had left one plain implication behind him that was, in effect, his final undoing. This implication was that he was an experienced criminal. The certainty that he must have had his female disguise all ready in case of emergency was sufficient alone to prove that. And putting various things together, we came to the conclusion that it was Hinkson who had played the part of the mysterious Annie Gooch, whom we had badly wanted and been unable to find in connection with the Sydenham Bank Robbery, carried out the night before "Mr. O. Playfair" went to stay at 13 Richmond Avenue.

That connection gave the C.I.D. some useful facts, which enabled us subsequently to track the Gooch-Playfair-Hinkson combination to Vienna, where he was staying as Fräulein Goetler. He was so noticeable as a man, but in no way remarkable when dressed as a woman. He never came to trial, however, as he resisted arrest, shot one

Austrian police officer, and severely wounded the English detective before he was shot himself.

There remain two or three little details to clear up with regard to the murder of Major Bird. There can, I think, be no question that he had taken Hinkson into his confidence about his employment as a composer of cross-word puzzles. He was probably proud of his ability, and regretted that his fraud on the Inland Revenue forbade him to speak about his one gift. (It really was a gift, and my Sunday paper has now lost one of its attractions.)

And Hinkson was as clever as paint and would be quite capable of drawing his inferences with regard to that great *cache* of notes in the safe. As to the fragment of the cross-word puzzle I had found, I can picture Hinkson doing it on the sea-front, tearing it out of the paper and taking it back to the Major, probably uncompleted, whether because he had been beaten by the clues or, as is more likely, because he wished to flatter the Major's vanity. The puzzle had then been torn up and thrown into the waste-paper basket to be burnt next

morning with all the other material relating to the Major's occupation. And Hinkson, with the cool far-sightedness that characterised him, had gone through the basket and picked out all the other pieces, missing the one small corner that had got into the fold of the letter.

The smell of burning rubber noticed by Miss Camfer was due, I think, to the destruction of a pair of surgeon's rubber gloves by Hinkson when he got back to his own room. In the drawing-room bookcase, a glass-fronted affair, was subsequently found, almost out of sight, one of those tins that are stamped and coloured to resemble the back of a book, and this tin contained the debris of burnt rubber and ashes of paper.

Little Hinkson discovered in this and other details of his work quite a whimsical fancy in the laying of false clues, and that he liked his humour in this connection to be appreciated is shown by the fact that before escaping through the cottage—after he had made certain by the finding of the parcel of notes that the game was up—he had neatly arranged the Major's two artificial legs on the hearthrug before the sitting-room grate, just to give me a hint as to how he had been able to assume the disguise of a man five feet ten inches high while P.C. Churt was passing on his beat.



# Honeymoon

*They were so young,  
so deep in love—and yet  
there was a shadow over them*

IN the wide double-bed, on his wedding-night, John stirred, turned upon his back and awoke to the cold, extraordinary regard of the moon shining in upon him through the open window. Out of a dark blue sky faintly silvered over by the brightness, the moon poured forth a flood of light so strange and passionless that it seemed to cool the air. A handbreadth of clear sky separated the moon from the branches of the great lime-tree that stood out black against the square of night framed by the window, and already the leaves nearest to the light were touched at their edges with unearthly silver. Soon the moon would be entangled in the branches, but now it poured its still radiance into the room as if time were not and it would be always thus—this heavenly night, the first night of love, and his young bride sleeping beside him in the moonlight.

Presently he would touch her and waken her. Presently, when the moon had gone behind the tree, but not yet. How strange and sweet this moment was, how lovely to feel the warmth of her body in sleep beside him and not to waken her! He turned his head on the pillow and looked at her lying there, so close beside him yet how withdrawn from him in the remoteness of sleep and the estranging moonlight, her face half-turned towards him, her arm and shoulder uncovered, her fingers, whose touch was delight, curving away into shadow. By this alien light there was no colour in her face, only the beauty of sculptural form and shadow. He looked long at the brow, so youthful and serene, the lashes, the closed lids, the lips that he had kissed to sleep. Then he turned his head away and lay looking at the

moon. He would not turn to her again or waken her until the moon had gone behind the tree.

He was glad that he had brought her here for their wedding-night and not to some impersonal hotel bedroom in a place that meant nothing to them. This was the beginning of their life together and it was right that this night should be spent in the place where they would live their life, this place where they belonged, their home. It was something to have a home to bring your bride back to, and how he loved his, how he had longed for it in the years when he had been far away! It was good to travel, fine to see the world, but how wonderful to return to your own place at last! His work was here. Good as this land was, he would leave it better than he found it. He would put his best labour and his love into this land; surely it would respond to him as to no other man living, for had he not known it and loved it from childhood; and generations of his family before him, had they not worked and cherished this land to bring it to be the rich freehold that was now his inheritance? Oh, he was a happy man tonight. Youth and love and health, a house and fine land of his own—what more could a man ask of life?

He pictured the quiet countryside out there under the moon, each field, each footpath intimately known to him, stretching away in beauty to the blue hills. Circled round with fields, backed by its walled garden, the house stood square, simply built of grey stone, roomy enough to be comfortable, not too big to be homely. In front of it spread the wide lawn, dominated by the great linden whose branches shaded the windows of the spacious room—the best, the master's

*So it must come at last to this. They too must go the way of all men and women who had loved in this room before them.*





by  
**P. Y. BETTS**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
ERNEST RATCLIFF

bedroom—where John lay to-night by the side of his young wife.

The outer twigs of the linden were now all but brushing the edge of the moon, so far it had moved westward across the clear space of sky seen from the bed; indeed, when a movement of the air gently stirred the leaves, a single leaf was silhouetted momentarily black against the moon's face, then subsided again into the dark mass of the tree. The scent of lime-flowers floated into the room and dissolved upon the cool moonlit air: the very breath of summer, of a unique sweetness; then all was still again, as if time were no more.

The moonbeams slanted in through the two windows upon a scene little different, thought John, from many they had shone upon on innumerable nights before—this room, not much altered in arrangement during the last two hundred years, and in the wide bed a man of his blood lying beside his bride. (Though never before so sweet a night as this, never so fair a bride.) Generations of his family had loved and lain wakeful and died in this room and here their children had been begotten and born. What scenes of tenderness and grief this room had witnessed, all suffered by ancestors of his whose fugitive spirit he now inherited, rejoicing in the pride of his manhood and the power of life in him, while they lay dead! He himself had been born in this room. Now he was sleeping in it for the first time since babyhood, and it was his wedding-night.



## Honeymoon

They would know such happiness together, he and Pauline. They would have children, strong and gay and lovely children, and he would work and put his best into his land so that his children might receive it better even than he had found it. There would be endless summer days of work and leisure and unnumbered nights to come as wonderful as this, with his young wife lying beside him, so near that he had but to reach out a hand to touch her breast and waken her to love. But he would not waken her yet, not until the moon was

hidden behind the leaves of the tree.

Half the face of the moon was reticulated over now by a lacework of delicate twigs. The bare twigs gave a strange and wintry look out of harmony with the rich leafy outline of the rest of the tree and the summery scent of the lime-flowers. He had not noticed before that part of the tree was dead, it needed to be seen from this angle with the clear light behind it for the leaflessness to be apparent. To-morrow he would have the dead branch cut away. It gave a curious effect of winter in the midst of summer, silhouetted thus against the moon.

The golden years opened out before him. He would cherish Pauline always with his whole heart and stand vigilantly between her and unhappiness, and the love between them would be perfect to their lives' end. How could his love ever fail towards a wife so tender and desirable, whose wonderful bodily freshness delighted all his senses? Their love would never become stale and commonplace, it would be a sacrament between them for ever. It was such deep joy and comfort to feel the warmth of her lying beside him asleep and to know that not only for this one perfect night but for all the perfect nights to come she would be there beside him, his comfort and his joy. The moon would still be shining full on her; if he were to waken her now he would see the little moons reflected in her eyes as the white lids lifted, the drowsy smile of pleasure as she waked to his caress. But he would not yet awaken her; he would honour this grave and lovely moment, this vigil of love, until the leaves of the lime-tree hid the moon from him. So he lay still, staring through the network of bare twigs outlined against the moon, watching with his mind's eye his bride sleeping beside him in beauty while his imagination travelled the long future of their love. And slowly the moon moved behind the cover of the leaves.

He drew a deep sigh of perfect happiness and turned towards his young wife, raising himself quietly upon one elbow to fill his eyes with the sight of her.

She lay as she had been lying before, with her face half-turned towards him, but no longer in the full moonlight. The moonlight fell upon her now through the dead part of the tree and all her face was marred with little lines—lines from nose to mouth, lines across the forehead, shadows hollowed round the closed eyes. By a wizardry of moonlight and deep shadow her rounded chin jutted peakily, her nose jutted to balance it above the sunken mouth. Over her sleeping face the pattern of old age lay like a mask, grotesquely, foreshadowing the face that was to be.

He looked at her for a moment in horror, seeing the end of love. So it must come at last to this. There was no escape. They too must go the way of all the men and women who had loved each other in this room before them; they too must grow old and die. Even they were not immune—even they. And then the brief moment of horror gave way to pity as he looked down at his bride, so innocent in sleep of the appalling change that time would work upon her. He felt profound compassion. How much more than he had dreamed did she stand in need of his tenderness now! Sooner or later her freshness must perish and the beauty of youth forsake her—let not his love forsake her too. She would have need of all his love. There was nothing he could do to shield her. No power of his could avail to save her from the common fate that lay in wait for her. The most and the least he could do was to watch over her and be always gentle.

He leant over and kissed her on the brow.

Her eyes opened slowly. She lay for a long moment unmoving, looking gravely into his face. Then she lifted her arms, took his face between her hands, drew down his head and gave him a long kiss, it seemed to him of an especial tenderness.

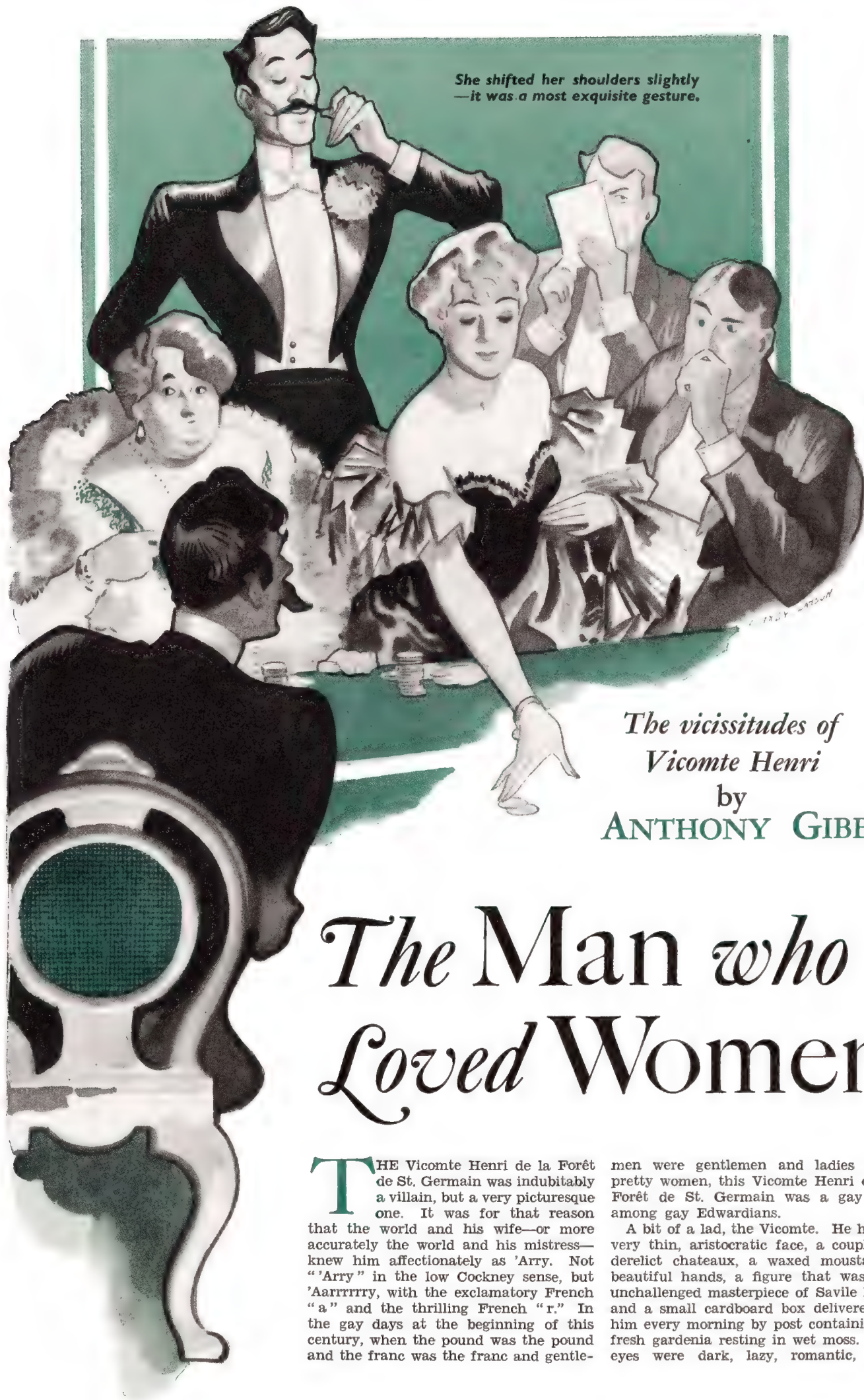
"Sweet, you're shivering. Why are you shivering?" he whispered.

"It was nothing. It's all right now you're close to me. It was only a trick of the moonlight. Only when I woke up then and saw you beside me I thought for a moment you looked like a stranger—like an old man. But it was only the moonlight," she whispered back, as he drew her away from the moonlight, into his arms, into the shadows.

*Of that quiet countryside, each field, each footpath, stretching away to the blue hills, was known to him.*







*She shifted her shoulders slightly  
—it was a most exquisite gesture.*

*The vicissitudes of  
Vicomte Henri*  
by  
**ANTHONY GIBBS**

# *The Man who Loved Women*

**T**HE Vicomte Henri de la Forêt de St. Germain was indubitably a villain, but a very picturesque one. It was for that reason that the world and his wife—or more accurately the world and his mistress—knew him affectionately as 'Arry. Not "Arry" in the low Cockney sense, but 'Aarrrrrry, with the exclamatory French "a" and the thrilling French "r." In the gay days at the beginning of this century, when the pound was the pound and the franc was the franc and gentle-

men were gentlemen and ladies were pretty women, this Vicomte Henri de la Forêt de St. Germain was a gay dog among gay Edwardians.

A bit of a lad, the Vicomte. He had a very thin, aristocratic face, a couple of derelict chateaux, a waxed moustache, beautiful hands, a figure that was the unchallenged masterpiece of Savile Row, and a small cardboard box delivered to him every morning by post containing a fresh gardenia resting in wet moss. His eyes were dark, lazy, romantic, and



## The Man Who Loved Women

superbly critical. The French have a special word meaning "to undress mentally." When the Vicomte allowed his eyes to rest on a pretty woman he allowed them sometimes to do this and appraise the result, but always, of course, from the strictly artistic point of view. For the Vicomte was a gourmet of women, never a gourmand. He sipped, he savoured, in the most delicate way. He was the most attractive of villains. The most respectable ladies simply adored him.

As for the Vicomte, he simply adored them back. Most men have their little acquisitive peculiarities which pursue them through life. Some people collect bus-tickets, stamps, conkers, copies of *Punch*, pictures by Cézanne, Ming horses, moths, motor-cars or simply impressions. For his part the Vicomte preferred pretty women. There is no telling how many pretty women the Vicomte had touched upon since the year 1900, when his tastes first developed, till the year 1929, when the loss of his wealth made it so difficult to indulge them. His path was strewn with fluttering eyelashes and little curls at the nape of the neck and parted lips and tired sighs; and since the Vicomte's path was restricted to a very well-defined social orbit, there is no

doubt that his conquests in love, if placed end to end, would have reached from the Hôtel de Paris at Monte Carlo, via the Ritz in Paris, Claridge's in London (for Ascot), the Normandie at Le Touquet, the Palais at Biarritz, the Waldorf Astoria, and subsequently the Plaza in New York, back to the Hôtel de Paris in Monte Carlo—except for one year when they stretched all round the world. That was on a cruise. It was in the year 1900, and all, of course, because of a pretty woman.

Her name was Emily Sargeant, a widow, as he ascertained from his friend the negro porter at the Hôtel de Paris, and she was adorable. She was American and vivacious, and he was struck first of all by the charming texture of the skin on her arms and shoulders as she sat one night in the International Sporting Club, and by the perfection of her black dress which added such interest to her flaxen hair and her deep blue eyes. He couldn't see her eyes at first because he stood behind her at the table, fluffing his moustache up from his lip and letting his eyes dwell under lazy lids on her shoulders as she leant across the table and her arms as she placed her plaques, like a connoisseur taking in the lines of a vase. The Vicomte was an expert in these matters, and he had never seen so exquisite a patina, so subtle a depth of texture. It was like the petal of a rose, a tea-rose, because she was browned a little by the Riviera sun.

For a moment the Vicomte became lost

in its contemplation. His mind searched for the exact adjectives. He was delighted. As unostentatiously as possible he withdrew through the little knot of watchers that ringed the table, and sauntered round. He wanted to see the other side. He was not disappointed. Her eyes were blue. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

He watched her stack a few plaques on 17. He muttered polite apologies to someone over whose shoulder he was forced to lean, and put out his own shapely hand in its elegant white cuff to stake a chip or two on the same number.

"Messieurs et Dames. . . . Les jeux sont faits. . . . Rien ne va plus. . . . Le Douze!"

They had lost. The American lady laughed. The Vicomte smiled, to himself, and shrugged his shoulders imperceptibly. She backed the zero. He backed the zero too.

The croupier's chant sang forth like the cry of the muezzin. "Rien ne va plus. . . ."

Lost again.

She backed the zero. He backed the zero.

"Messieurs et Dames. . . . Faites vos jeux. . . . Les jeux sont faits. . . . Rien ne va plus. . . . Le Zéro!"

The American lady clapped her hands. The croupier, bored to extinction, made two little piles of counters and shovelled them across, one to him, one to her. They reached out together. Just for a second their eyes met. Hers were danc-



*His path was strewn with fluttering eyelashes, with parted lips and tired sighs.*



ing. He hid a smile. Then the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain picked up his winnings, apologised politely to the people behind him, and withdrew.

He did not see her again that night, nor the next night. But on the night after that as she left the Hôtel de Paris the Vicomte inhaled his brandy in a cane chair, and beckoned to the negro porter.

"Who is that, my friend?" he asked.

"That species of edible fowl?" replied the porter.

"You will please be respectful to a beautiful woman," said the Vicomte severely. "Well?"

So he learned that she was Mrs. Sargeant, an American, married to an Englishman, who was conveniently demised.

For his part the Vicomte found it neither more nor less convenient whether the husband was alive or dead. Nevertheless, since he was conveniently dead—he lit a cigar, swallowed his brandy, accepted his hat, and sauntered into the intoxicating night air.

That night he stood behind her.

"Pardon, madame," he said, as he leaned forwards to make his stake, on the same number as hers. They lost.

"Ah, pardon, madame," he said, as the process was repeated. They won. The Vicomte fluffed out his moustache from the lips, and said, "Madame, je vous demande pardon. Ah, ne vous dérangez-vous pas! Pardon," as he reached for his money.

She shifted her shoulders slightly. It was an exquisite gesture. The Vicomte was tremendously attracted by it. This time he staked his winnings alone on Number 8. She put hers on Number 5. The little white ball jumped into Number 32.

The Vicomte straightened himself, pitched a five-franc note to the croupier (the franc was a franc in those days) and went away.

But not so very far away. He went and, after a little business, stood bare-headed beside the statue of Massenet at

the corner of the "terrasses," and stared out over the still Mediterranean while the night air played about his fine temples. And there the world and his wife—or perhaps the world and his mistress—greeted him.

"'Aarrrry mon vieux! Comment ça va, hein?"

Pretty ladies, too, stopped in front of him with their escorts, and held out their little gloved hands delightedly. In three-quarters of an hour he had been invited to the International Sporting Club five times, to the Casino once, to Ciro's eleven times, to a performance of *Carmen* nine times, to a villa in Sicily once, to take the daughter of an English lady to tea at the Negresco while the mother went shopping in Nice once, to shoot rabbits in Hampshire and boar in the Carpathians once each by an English and a Russian general respectively. . . . To all of them the Vicomte made the same answer. He sighed. He demanded Pardon. Urgent affairs demanded his presence on the *terrasses* that night, and in Monte Carlo for some time to come.

They laughed at him. "You have a rendezvous, eh, 'Arry?"

He sniffed deeply of the gardenia in his button-hole, and resumed his watch over the swing door of the Sporting Club from beside the statue of Massenet.

There were many pretty women in Monte Carlo in 1906, pretty enough to attract the notice of M. le Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain. But he saw none of them, being content to remain a romantic figure in the half darkness, with a red point glowing, which was the end of his cigar, and his white shirt front showing greyly when the palm tree above him rustled and let through a wisp of illumination from the lamp in its foliage.

At one o'clock she came. He threw away his cigar into some Jerusalem artichokes, stepped into the road, and climbed immediately on to the box of the *fiacre* which stood with drooping nag and guttering candles. The horse awoke and started down the slope.

She hailed him, and he pulled the brake on with the screech of metal against the metal tyre.

She stood for a moment in astonishment. He knew that, though he did not look at her, but remained staring fixedly ahead in an agony of apprehension and wondering what she would do. Then he felt the springs of the *fiacre* settle delicately as she stepped into her seat. She said nothing.

He took off the brake, and the horse sidled gingerly down the steep incline towards the red and green lighthouses that mark the entrance to the harbour of Monaco. He drove her past this, sitting very rigidly on his box, and then her voice came to him from behind, tremolo with amusement.



"Is this the way to the Restaurant des Ambassadeurs?" she asked.

He did not turn, but the horse seemed to stop of its own accord.

"The food at Ciro's is considered to be better," he said.

"But this isn't the way to Ciro's either."

"In this world," said the Vicomte, "everything is possible if one wishes to make it so."

"I see," said the lady. "So to-night the way to Ciro's is around by the harbour and the brasserie de Monaco."

"To-night," declared the Vicomte, rather sepulchral through the tails of his coat, "the way to anywhere is via the night air and the scents of darkness."

"I like your cheek," she replied.

He turned slowly on the box and regarded her. "Madame," he said politely, "you are so beautiful that I suffer."

Her laugh rang out at that and echoed round the sleeping harbour so that a couple of pigeons rose and rocketed away.

"Who are you, anyway?" she demanded.

"Permit me. I am the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain."

"I'm Mrs. Sargeant."

He bowed.

"If ever I am permitted a more intimate acquaintance, may I say that I have never beheld anything of so exquisite a perfection as the texture of your skin?"

She sat back and folded her coat round her. "Drive on," she said.

The Vicomte laughed in the darkness. "Where to, Madame?"

"I'm in your hands," she said.

It was at two o'clock that the negro porter of the Hôtel de Paris was woken from deep slumber to greet the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain and Madame Sargeant, who arrived together in a *fiacre*, both sitting upon the box.

He married her. This was sufficiently remarkable, because the Vicomte was not of the type which the world knows as a "marrying man." He had never, so far as he was aware, married a woman before, and he certainly never married another. It was one of those lapses from intelligent moderation which may defeat





the good intentions of the most abstemious. The truth was that the Vicomte lost his head over Lillian. That was because he lost his heart to her. It was the one and only time in his life that he was in love.

Thirty years later, when Monte Carlo was not quite Monte Carlo and the franc was not the franc, nor the pound the pound, and gentlemen were not gentlemen and all women were perfect ladies, the Vicomte used to dwell on this episode in an otherwise dilettante past with a feeling of sweet regret. He was never quite certain whether he regretted loving Lillian or whether he regretted marrying her. He never could quite make up his mind whether he had behaved quite as the Comte de la Forêt de St. Germain should in that matter. He was unable to make up his mind, because the feeling of regret which it induced was so painful that he was in the habit of dismissing it from his mind and making, at the earliest possible moment, love to someone else. Her vitality, her laughing eyes, her little tricks of manner, her charm, the queer sense of rapier-like domesticity he had experienced at the beginning of that voyage. . . . It did not bear meditation. The feeling of regret. . . .

He married her at Nice with the kind assistance of the American consul, and forthwith had embarked with her on a voyage round the world. At Monaco, where they started, he remembered standing at the liner's rail, arm in arm, immaculate, caught, while a crowd of *cosmopolites* stood on the quayside waving and laughing as if he had done something inordinately funny. At Corfu they went ashore together and made a tour of the island by cab. She bought picture postcards. At Cairo they visited the Sphinx by moonlight, bought picture postcards, and he noticed on rejoining the boat that an extraordinarily pretty woman had taken a cabin on "A" Deck. At Aden he developed an inhibiting neuralgia, so Lillian went ashore alone to buy picture postcards while he entertained the lady to tea in the writing-room. At Colombo he was able to buy a gardenia while Lillian was choosing her cards, but at the Federated Malay States, for some extraordinary reason, the lady disembarked. Her husband had some connection with rubber.

Lillian remaining as amusing and sarcastic and good-natured as ever, he discovered between Java and Sydney an extraordinarily pretty woman in the second-class; and in Sydney, by all that was wonderful, he was hailed in the lounge of the Welcome Hotel by a little woman who cried out to him, "Mon Dieu, c'est 'Arry!" in a way that suddenly made his heart jump beneath his monogrammed silk shirt. He remembered, afterwards, that she had had some vague marital connection with Australia. What a banishment! He did his gallant utmost to alleviate it.

In the Pacific islands he was enormously interested in the possibilities of the Polynesians and was able, thanks to the colonising genius of the American people, to send a cable to San Francisco arranging for gardenias to await the arrival of the boat. In San Francisco she left him—that is, Lillian did. The Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain shrugged his

shoulders. She was a realist. He was also a realist. The strange homing instinct of the Americans—it was useless to pretend. There were at least three exquisitely beautiful women in San Francisco, while in New York—

So the force of habit closed over, and the adventure, receding normally into the past, became more and more minutely episodic. But still, thirty years later, as he called skilfully into being the little curls at the nape of the neck, he remembered, regretfully, Lillian. . . . She had been his wife.

Now real life is very queer. Fate was always a practical joker. There were four million people killed in a war. The Vicomte's two chateaux were in ruins; and since there was no connection between these events the Vicomte had been unable to profit from either. There had been a slump in America. Things were not as they were. Not even the Vicomte was as he was. In short, he had no money. In fine—

The orbit of the Vicomte was still the social orbit. He spent the summer at Aix les Bains, the autumn, since Biarritz was not what it was, at St. Jean de Luz. On January the fifteenth, since Monte Carlo was not what it was, he proceeded to Cannes, and then, by easy stages coincident with the tennis tournaments, he edged his way along the coast by way of Beaulieu, Cap d'Ail, Cap Martin, and so to Mentone. In the spring he was at the Ritz in Paris. In early summer at Claridge's (for Ascot). There is quite a class of vagabond *coiffeurs* who do this, very superior ones, of the most grand chic, who— But the secret is out. The Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain had faded, together with his period. He had become a *coiffeur*; and, since the clientele at these places is not what it was, he was known, respected and universally loved as 'Arry, in the low Cockney sense.

If the truth must be told his new mode of life suited him very well. He followed the old round of the old remembered places. His collection of pretty women had assumed impressive proportions. He had only to wait for them in his chromium-plated lair, white-coated, gardenia'd, debonair, smelling faintly of eau-de-Cologne, and they came to him, delivered themselves into his hands. There was about him an air of mystery, of a past, of his not always having been a barber, which women found irresistible. His hands were so aristocratic. His touch was so gentle and caressing. His eyes, when they met in the mirror, were so lazy, so appraising, so *appreciative*. He liked best the *friction*, so that he could fondle their heads. He was a Don Juan among barbers.

Not that there were no difficulties. Things change, and while his clients came mostly in the most enchanting beach costumes topped with nothing but a banda. ra tied at the neck and waist, so that sometimes he was almost faint with beauty, he found that these modern ladies hid behind a curious frankness and humour that disarmed his most subtle artillery. The conquest of women had been easier in the days of mystery. Nevertheless he prospered.

There was one young woman in par-

**She looked at herself for a long time. But she betrayed even less emotion than he.**

ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

CLIXBY WATSON



ticular. He was at the Golf Hotel at St. Jean de Luz, surrounded by the gleaming apparatus of his craft. A fan whirled soporifically above the door. In a curtained alcove a very pretty woman sat backwards in a chair with her hair falling behind her into the basin, while he rinsed it gently with soft water from a rose.

"Your hair, madame," he said, "is delicious."

"Oh, you think so?" smiled the lady, pleased.

"It is—attractive to men," said 'Arry seriously. "It has texture. Shall I go a little colder, madame?"





At that moment the curtains of the alcove were violently withdrawn, and he looked up to find himself lost in the bluest eyes he had ever seen. They smiled in a sunburned face, but he had no eye for details, being thrown, momentarily, off his balance by the whole bewildering nearness of her beauty. His brain spun madly with an acute sensitivity to bronzed legs and shoulders and sun-bleached hair, and then in an instant he had recollected himself.

"Mademoiselle désire?" he asked.

"Are you Monsieur Harry?"

He bowed with a sort of delayed nod, allowing his eyes to narrow with flattery

first.

"I want a hair cut, a shampoo, a set, and some good advice about marriage."

His teeth flashed beneath his moustache. "In two minutes, mademoiselle, I am entirely at your service."

It took him exactly one minute and forty-five seconds to turn the dryer on to his existing lady and to usher her forth.

"Now, mademoiselle."

He sat her in the chair, produced his shroud and then hesitated, fixing his eyes on her shoulders and back. For a moment he remained like that, savouring their young firmness and charming

contours. Then he put his hand delicately at the base of her neck.

"It is painful, a little—the sunburn?"

"It is a bit," she admitted.

"Allow me," said the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain. He fetched a bottle of perfumed white stuff and began with the greatest possible gentleness to apply it all over her back. Then he held out his aristocratic fingers, stretched them like a pianist who is about to play, and set to work.

"Mademoiselle is about to be married?" he inquired, with the proper diffidence.

"Well, I'm wondering. I'm told there's nothing you don't know about all that sort of thing."

"Oh, mademoiselle, you are too kind."

"So I've come to consult the oracle."

He stopped kneading for a moment and met her eyes in the mirror.

"Before I can advise, mademoiselle, I must know the names of the parties."

"Well, his name's Captain the Honourable Arbuthnot Villiers."

He remained rigid for a second in astonishment. Then he went on kneading. It was the name of a notorious collector of pretty women. A young man after his own character.

"He has proposed marriage to Mademoiselle?"

"Well, you see, Harry, Yes and No."

"There is, I think, a Mrs. Villiers?"

"Two," said the girl.

"It is enough," said the Vicomte.

"That is more comfortable, mademoiselle?"

"That's lovely."

Reluctantly he took the shroud and veiled her charms.

"If Mademoiselle would lean forward, just so slightly, so—" He took the scissors and began to trim the little curls at the nape of her neck.

"I'm not awfully fond of the extra-wedlock idea, Harry. Not that I've ever tried it."

The Vicomte smiled to the head of hair. "There are times, mademoiselle, when it is convenient. It depends on the character, the social position of the protagonists. Mademoiselle has not yet favoured me with an introduction."

She laughed. "You'd never guess it," she said, "from my American accent, but I'm Grace de la Forêt de St. Germain. How's that?"

The Vicomte's scissors remained in mid-snip in mid-air.

"Your father—was the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain?"

"Why, yes. Did you know him?"

"Very well," said the Vicomte. "If Mademoiselle would incline her head slightly—so—"

"A bit of a bad lad, from all accounts. Not so much sinned against, as sinning."

He nodded, thoughtfully.

"Et madame la Vicomtesse?" said the Vicomte. "She is with you?"

"No, she's home in New York. I came over with a party."

"And the party?"

"I've lost that," she said. "It's the best way with parties."

"You are—alone—mademoiselle?"

"Well, there's always Tiny. Oh, I didn't tell you. That's Captain the Honourable—"

"I know," he said.



## The Man Who Loved Women

"You know everything, Harry."

"I know," he said, "that Monsieur Tiny is not the kind of man—I mean, mademoiselle, that if I had a daughter—"

She laughed at him. "Listen to our Harry!" she exclaimed, "coming over all kind of pompous."

"If I take about an inch off at the back, mademoiselle?"

"Aha. Anyway, I'm going over with them to Cannes to-morrow."

"To the Carlton, mademoiselle?"

"The Beau-Site, I guess."

He whistled.

"Why, Harry! Don't tell me you're coming too!"

"It is a remarkable coincidence."

"Isn't that wonderful! You'll be able to go on giving me good advice."

His eyes met hers in the glass and held them.

"I think, mademoiselle," he said, "that you are dangerously beautiful." He held a mirror to the back of her head.

It was only when he was a barber that the Vicomte allowed the proper touch of subservience to creep into his manner. When he travelled by train he became again the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain. He sauntered down the platform with a gardenia and yellow gloves, preceded by a porter bearing the most exquisitely aristocratic valises. Porters, restaurant-car attendants and *wagons-lits* men abandoned their pretence of allegiance to the Anglo-Saxon races and rushed to do him honour. With a few well-chosen phrases and a mere indication of his desires with a lazy wave of the hand, he turned protesting American ladies out of their centre compartments, acquired tables for himself in crowded *wagons-restaurants*, had his bed made up obsequiously at the precise moment he determined, flaunted a blue rosette in his button-hole that indicated heaven knows what exaltation, and ob-

tained, when convenient, an immediate and understanding relaxation of the rules which prohibit (for the Anglo-Saxon) any nocturnal commingling of the sexes.

On this occasion he travelled alone, but occupied nevertheless two compartments, of which one was his own and the other had been paid for by Captain the Honourable Arbuthnot Villiers. At breakfast he occupied the only remaining table for four, so that when Captain Villiers and his aunt by divorce and Miss de la Forêt de St. Germain entered the car, Captain Villiers and his aunt had perforce to sit at a table for two; whereupon he rose politely, indicated the place opposite his with a wave of his hand, bowed gravely without speaking, sat, dipped his roll in the coffee, and remained staring quite expressionlessly out of the window, jogging perceptibly to the motion of the train.

At Cannes, thanks to the fact that he travelled in the only remaining taxi, he arrived at the hotel first, alighted at the front door, clapped the manager on the back, called him his "*vieux*," obtained the situation of barber, and was able to arrange that only one double and one single room remained vacant at the hotel, so that by no possible combination or permutation of cohabitats could the aunt be fortunate enough to possess a room all to herself. Then he unpacked and went into the basement to earn the tearful and heartfelt thanks of the wrongfully dismissed *coiffeur* by giving him the tip that he personally knew of a vacancy at the Golf Hotel at St. Jean de Luz. He was shaved, watched with sphinx-like sympathy the man depart, stubbed out his cigar and donned his own white coat.

It was curious that, during the fortnight which ensued, not once did the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain attend to the hair of Mademoiselle de la Forêt de St. Germain, whereas everybody knows that the head of a really beautiful girl should be dressed far more frequently than this. She came, neither for hairdressing nor advice, and the Vicomte surmised rightly and with a pang that it was not the hairdressing which was likely to prove unpalatable, but the advice.

But he did cut the hair of the head of Captain the Honourable Arbuthnot Villiers, with an oil shampoo and a vibro-massage into the bargain.

"Hullo, Harry, you old reprobate," said Captain Villiers heartily. "I didn't know you were here. What's the score. Six hundred and ninety-seven not out?"

"It pleases Monsieur le Capitaine to be facetious," said the Vicomte. "I regret to announce that you are becoming a little bit thin on the top." He placed his finger on the spot, so that the Captain might feel.

"Anno Domini," said the Captain. "You know my blasted aunt?"

"I have not had that privilege, mon capitaine."

"Privilege!" exclaimed the Captain. "Thank God she's going to Monte Carlo to-morrow to have a couple of her blasted teeth out."

"Will she go—for long?" the Vicomte inquired.

"Long enough," said the Captain. "D'you mind if I put this cigarette out?"

"Monsieur will know how to employ himself well alone?"

"Not alone," said the Captain. "And not here, thank the lawks. We're off for a cruise on the good ship *Yacki-hickidula*."

"The aunt, monsieur?"

"Not the aunt, you fool," said the Captain. "I ask you, would I go for a cruise with a blasted aunt?"

"The birds," nodded the Vicomte, "will have flown."

"Well, go easy with that damned clipper," said Captain the Honourable Arbuthnot Villiers.

Quite clearly Miss de la Forêt de St. Germain's neglect of her hair had been unpleasant but intentional. The moment the steamship *Adriatic* had steamed out into the Mediterranean she made her way down to the hairdressing establishment on "E" deck and flung herself in the empty chair. For three minutes she sat alone, fingering her curls and examining herself in a hand glass, for there was no mirror fixed to the wall, but a glass case instead filled with shaving-soaps, false noses, nail-scissors and such other objects as passengers are likely to require on a cruise.

Then she heard the rings of the curtain swish behind her.

"I want a haircut, a shampoo, and a set," she said. "My hair hasn't been touched for weeks."

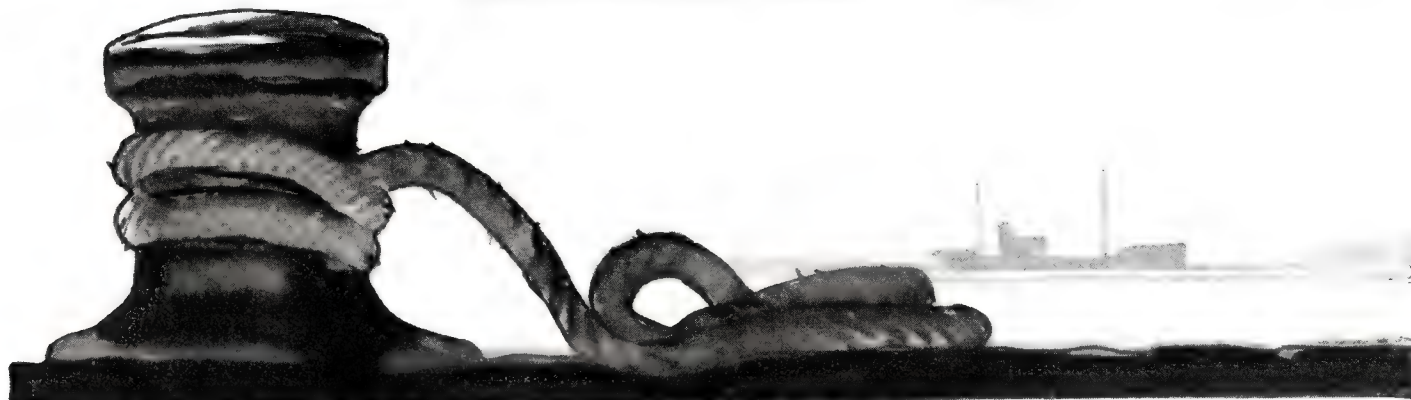
"So I observe, mademoiselle," said the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain.

She spun round in her chair. "Good Lord, Harry! Are you here?"

He bowed, smiling. "It is an extraordinary coincidence," he exclaimed.

She looked at him sharply. "Are you following me about on purpose?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," said the Vicomte. "Why?"





## Anthony Gibbs

He placed his white shroud round her before replying.

"Because, mademoiselle, you are dangerously beautiful."

"D'you mean you've fallen in love with me?"

"No, mademoiselle. It is simply that I am anxious to follow you—with my advice."

"Oh, don't be absurd," she said.

His scissors snipped, for some time, in silence. Then they stopped. "As a man of the world," he said with an unexpected catch in his voice, "I ask you to give up the thought of this adventure. It's unwise. It is foolishness. Be ill, and stay in your cabin."

Her pretty face turned to him with a sort of brazen effrontery that he knew covered real indecision.

"Well, I'm damned," she said. "I like your cheek."

"Other women have liked it," said the Vicomte softly.

"You get on with my hair," she ordered him.

"I implore you, mademoiselle. It is not wise. It is a mistake. You will be sorry. Life is not meant to be like that."

"It's my life," said the girl. "Will you *please* get on with your job?"

"Mademoiselle—I cannot endure to see you throw yourself away on this man. You were not meant for that."

"Will you stop talking to me like my own father and *get on with it!*"

"The Capitaine has to leave the ship at Naples, on Thursday. I know it be-

cause of the 'twelfth.' I implore you, mademoiselle. Stay in your cabin. Stay in your cabin till Friday!"

Her resentment gave way to astonishment at his vehemence.

"But, Harry! What's biting you? What does it have to do with you?"

"It has nothing whatever to do with me. But I implore you, mademoiselle. I should never forgive myself. As a man of the world—as the only person *in loco parentis*—"

"I think you'd better earn your half-dollar," she said.

He sighed tremendously and took up the scissors. "You will not be indisposed? You will not stay in your cabin till Friday, and then go home in the boat to America?"

"No," she said, "I will not."

The Vicomte sighed and set to work with his scissors. For a long time there was no sound but his snipping and the creak of his patent-leather boots as he moved. Then he shampooed her hair, and waved it, in silence. When all was done he removed the shroud with a curious little smile, pulled aside the curtain,

and held out the mirror.

She looked at herself for a long time. She was his own daughter. She showed even less emotion than he did. She handed him back the mirror.

"You'd better lend me a towel or something," she said quietly. "I can't go about like this."

He lent her the towel. She wound it round her head and then ran from him with something suspiciously like a sob.

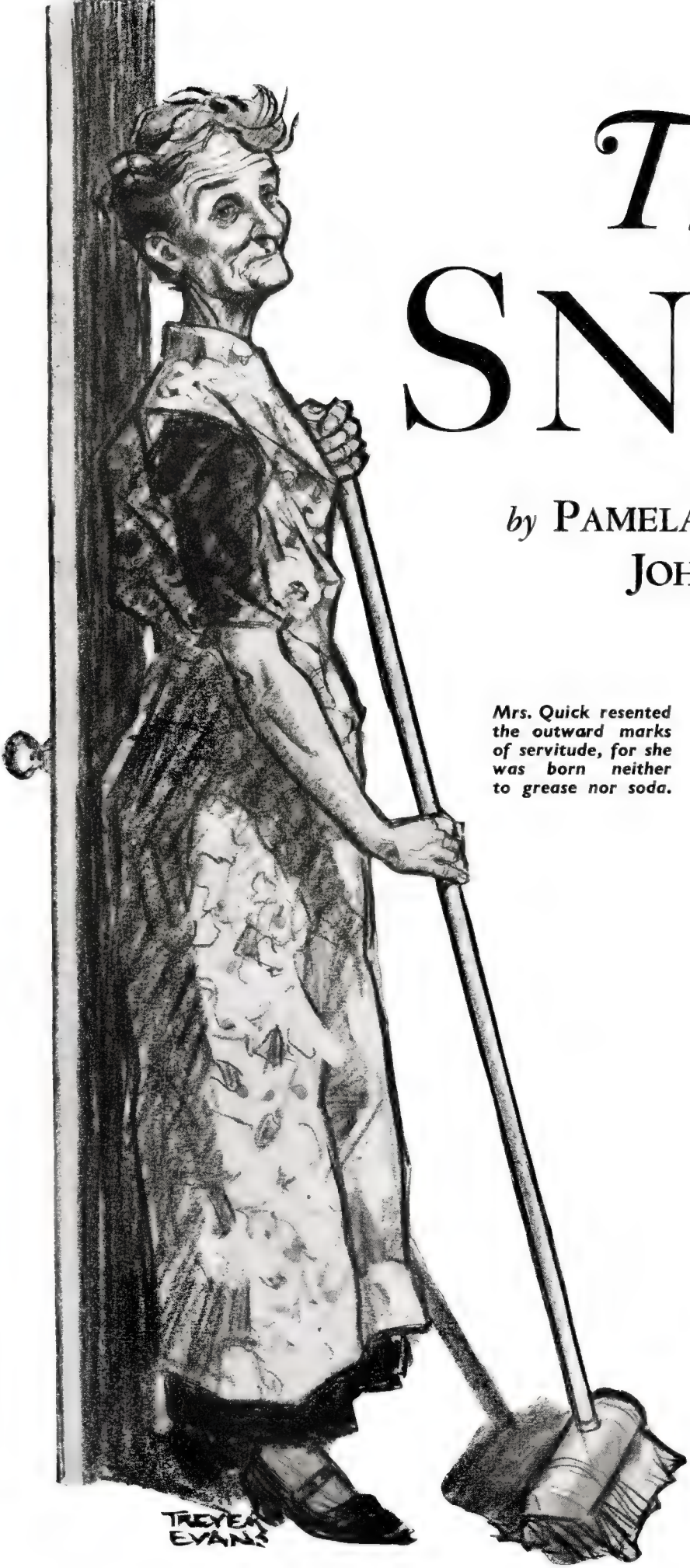
He stood for some time looking after her, with the same little smile playing about his face. Then, being a romantic man, he took a clean handkerchief and mopped the corners of his eyes with it. Then, being a sentimental one, he picked up by far the greater part of Miss de la Forêt de St. Germain's hair, which was lying on the floor, pressed it to his lips, and stuffed it into his pocket.

Captain the Honourable Arbuthnot Villiers left the ship at Naples. He was alone. The Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain also disembarked. He was not alone. There was also an exquisitely pretty little woman he had discovered in the second-class.

**At Naples the Vicomte de la Forêt de St. Germain disembarked. He was not alone.**







# The SNOB

by PAMELA HANSFORD  
JOHNSON

*Mrs. Quick resented the outward marks of servitude, for she was born neither to grease nor soda.*

MRS. QUICK finicked with the dishes. She looked at the clock. Nearly four. Time to dry up but not to put away, and the Old Girl could take a running jump at herself if she came in early and found the table cluttered up with crockery. Four o'clock was tea-time, and Mrs. Quick would keep the Angel Gabriel waiting while she swallowed her cup of tea. She withdrew her hands from the washing-up water, shuddered at the bloomy grease upon them and gave them a good wash with Sunlight under the tap. She took off her apron and at once felt better.

Mrs. Quick, smooth and yellow as a church candle, resented the outward marks of servitude, for she was born neither to grease nor soda. Before her husband died she had been a respectable housewife with a kitchen and a char of her own; she had counted upon an equally respectable widowhood but, when the time came to inquire into the late Albert's finances, it was discovered that he had no finances into which a body might inquire, and Mrs. Quick, still frozen with the shock, had been forced to go into service.

Being a woman of character she could have stuck it all right had she got a decent place. She had hoped to be called "Mrs.", to be treated, in fact, on the same footing as a housekeeper, but old Miss Harker, in whose employ she was, had other ideas.

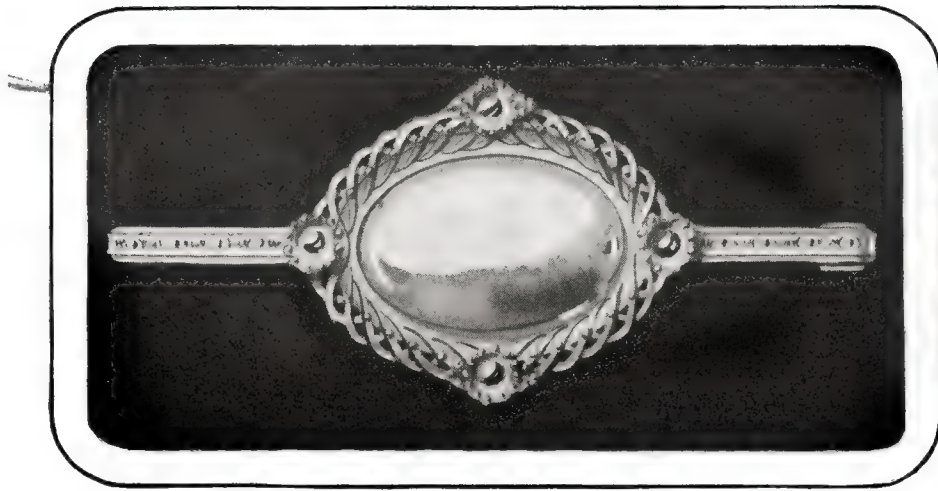
"What is your Christian name?" she had asked.

"Margaret," sulkily.

"Well, Maggie," said Miss Harker, "I'm sure we shall get on very nicely." And that was that.

Mrs. Quick dried the dishes and made the tea. Her feet were aching with all the running about, round and round like





a dog at a fair, after the Old Girl. Thank God she'd gone out and wouldn't be back until six.

She stared dispassionately at a newly discovered mousehole. That meant dirt all over the food if the little swine wasn't trapped. Well, let the Old Girl eat dirt. Mrs. Quick, at her time of life, wasn't going to play detective to a lot of slimy mice.

She was very tired. It would be nice to die. Or if only she could suddenly become very small, run down the mousehole after the mouse, and live with him for ever after in his soft, smelly darkness! She would rather be a mouse's mate than Miss Harker's slave.

Miss Harker. Scruffy old devil in black satin, hung like a Christmas tree with beads and bugles, with bits and pieces of jewellery. A bow on her great fat bust. Imagine Mrs. Quick in the same clothes and with the same advantages! That would be a sight worth seeing.

She quailed at the work yet to be done before seven o'clock came, when she might go home to her bitter rooms in the Trust Building. It was not so much the work she minded, though there was more than enough for one, but the indignity of it. Emptying the slops. Yes, and she must put a duster round the bedroom before the Old Girl came home.

Gazing at herself in the bit of mirror nailed on the cupboard door, she savagely admired her genteel appearance, her thin, cold face, her thin, lady-like figure. "Old cow," she whispered, "calling me Maggie!"

The door-bell rang. She went to answer it. On the step was a slick, handsome young man with Aristocrat written all over him. One of the Old Girl's posh friends, she thought.

He smiled at her and bowed. "Miss Harker?" he inquired.

She caught her breath. He recognised class when he saw it. Yet if she hadn't removed that damned apron he might have taken her for the char. Brief glory swept Mrs. Quick. For once in her life she took a risk.

"Why, yes," she said, inclining gently from the waist. "What can I do for you?"

His bright hair shone in the sun. His teeth were large and white. The little hairs of his moustache tingled with smartness. For a moment he did not answer, for he was enjoying her admiration; then, with the dexterity of a conjurer, he whipped a small parcel from his pocket.

"From Hiller Brothers," he said, "the brooch Madam ordered this morning. If you will please sign here. . . ."

He produced a pencil and receipt from another pocket. Propping the paper against the door, he invited her courtesy.

Mrs. Quick took the pencil. She twisted it nervously between her fingers. The young man was still smiling.

Then she signed, in the bold, beautiful handwriting for which she had won so many prizes when she was a girl at school. MISS CAROLINE HARKER. She paused. Then she added: O.B.E.

"Thank you, madam," he said, bowed once again and was off down the path before she could say, "Thank you!"

Mrs. Quick, with the sunshine expanding like a flower in her head, walked slowly back to her work. No longer did she want to declass herself with any kitchen mice, however quiet and homely they might be.

She had received recognition.

ILLUSTRATION  
BY  
TREYER EVANS

*Just fancy now,  
bein' mistook for the Old Girl  
herself!*





# Ghosts have Green Eyes

L'ASCENSION is three thousand miles from France, but it is all French. More than ever French, now that the timber has been cut and the logging crews have gone and Darrell O'Banion has made partial payment for his sins.

It is a devout and simple town—a single street of small white houses set in a blue loop of river on the edge of the Laurentian barrens. It is forty miles from a railway. It is quite certain that Darrell O'Banion will spend most of eternity completing his payment for the evil he did: Father Clement says that is so. And L'Ascension remembers Jacqueline, who was the first of O'Banion's many women.

It remembers also the fog-smoked dawn when Eudore Savard, who is the French-Iroquois constable at St. Jovite, came in from the barren lands with Thom Tetu hung like the carcass of a deer over his back.

Savard staggered as he crossed the whitewashed bridge; he was very tired. When he came to the stoop of Father Clement's little house, he leaned against the door-post and rapped with one foot. Father Clement is old and he sleeps lightly; he came to the door almost at once, his tasselled nightcap askew above his bony face.

"I brought Thom," Savard told him. "He was in his wife's old room at Red Camp."

The priest's thin arms looked all bone through the sleeves of his nightgown as he stretched them out, but they were strong enough for Thom's slight body. Savard wavered a little as he followed Father Clement into his bedroom.

"Did he shoot O'Banion?" asked the priest, his hands busy with caked bandages on Thom Tetu's chest.

"No. O'Banion shot him. Thom wants to tell you. Two days now he has kept

*. . . and their teeth are sharper  
than the weapons of men*

by NEIL H. SWANSON

saying: 'Take me to Father Clement. Father Clement was right. I must tell him that he was right.'

"You carried him, Eudore? Thirty miles?"

"He could not bear the jolting of a wagon. I thought he would die."

"He will, soon." Father Clement smoothed the matted hair away from Thom Tetu's forehead. "What is this in his hair, Eudore?"

"Wood, Father. Rotten wood. He wants to tell you himself. I have a little cognac left."

"Bon. Give it to him." The priest went towards the hall. "I shall return in a minute. The woman is here. It will be good for her to listen, here by the door, out of sight."

The cognac brought into Thom Tetu's lips a little of the blood that was left in his shrunken body. He lay huddled to his beard in blankets, but his tongue was brisk.

"This is one good man, this Eudore Savard," he told Father Clement when the priest came back. "I say to him it is necessary that I go to L'Ascension, so he has carried me over the mountain on his back. I think maybe God will reward him for that, eh? God is just; He has a long memory, Father. You told me the truth. All these years He has waited to punish O'Banion; and now, at the end He makes O'Banion to punish himself with his own sin."

Thom Tetu nodded. "That is right,

M'sieu' Savard. I desire that you set it down so in your notebook. I think maybe you should put down that it began when he called me Tom Tit. Yes, that is it. This O'Banion, he used to call me Tom Tit—little Tom Tit—and laugh, with his red head back between his shoulders. And Jacqueline, she laughed too. I am a small man. It was a good name for me, no? You have it down? Good. Now, I tell you what happened."

You comprehend—so runs the story as Eudore Savard set it down while Thom Tetu talked—Jacqueline had been my wife just three months when O'Banion hired me to be his clerk and to keep store in his logging camp on Two Rivers. All my life I had lived here in L'Ascension. I was in Montreal three years, at school, but I came home to be the school-teacher here and to marry my Jacqueline.

We were poor, M'sieu', but everyone is poor here. We had a little house with two rooms, just where the river bends. and we had a cat and three ducks, and a garden between the house and the river. The house was whitewashed, and when the sun was on the river it was like a diamond shining, with the water curved round it for a ring. It was all the diamond ring there was for Jacqueline. The cat was her wedding present; I gave it to her because she wanted a cat to lie in the sun on the rug at the door.





***I was not afraid to die. I wanted to die. But that was an awful way. The tiger cat was just in front of me. And I thought of something.***

We were happy. If you had seen Jacqueline, you would understand what has happened. She was tall—more tall than I am—and her hair was black like the pine trees in the dark night, and her eyes were blue like the river after the sun has gone down. They were deep

and still; and when we stood together on the bank in the evening, there would be stars shining in her eyes just the same as in the river. I loved her.

Then one night, there is this O'Banion on the river bank also. He was big and tall, and he had red hair that he kept



## Ghosts have Green Eyes

running his fingers through. He stood there in the path in his laced boots, with his shirt open on his chest, and told me he wanted me to work for him. He had bought much timber on Two Rivers, and almost before he bought it he had sold the lumber it would make. He was going to build a big camp for many men, and he wanted me to keep accounts. Someone here in the village had told him I had a head for figures and a wish to make money.

But I would not go. The camp would be thirty miles away in the mountains, and I would not leave Jacqueline.

When I said no, he laughed. He was like that—he would never let anyone say no.

He would build a house, he said, right next to the office—a house three times as big as our cottage—and it would belong to Jacqueline and me. Then he named again the money he would pay me; it was more than the school-teacher in L'Ascension is paid in three years. And we went.

We sold the three ducks, and we found a boy to take care of the garden. We took the cat, and a basket, too, because she had surprised us with four kittens; and we went in a wagon thirty miles. There were no springs to that wagon, and there was no road. Jacqueline and I sat together on a board laid across the wagon-box with a blanket on it, and held hands and sang songs. It was like going away on a wedding trip. Jacqueline bounced up and down on the board because she was so happy.

By and by the going was so bad that we both bounced up and down on the board. The wheels kept going up over big rocks and dropping down into deep holes, and Jacqueline picked up the basket with the kittens and held it in her lap.

You must put down about the cats. Everything I say about the cats you must put down. You see, it was not I who punished O'Banion; it was God.

In the afternoon we came to a place where the wagon turned up the bed of a stream. It was all rocks and rapids, with the water a foot deep and running fast. Just where we came to the little river, O'Banion was waiting for us, sitting on a big bay horse, with one leg crossed over the horn. He jumped down and waved to us.

"Hello, there, Thom!" he shouted. "Hello, there, Jacque!" He called her "Jacque," like that.

Me, I had never thought to call her

I jumped down into the river. I tried to run to her, but the current was so strong that I tripped and fell down. There I was on my hands and knees, all soaked, with O'Banion looking down at me and laughing.

"Ho, there, Tom Tit," he said. "Lucky I was here. You'd never have caught her, little Tom Tit."

They were both laughing when I got up out of the water, and Jacqueline pushed me away from her. She said I was too wet, and told me to pick up the kittens. They had fallen out of the basket and were running among the rocks, crying. O'Banion lifted Jacqueline on to the horse just as if she was no heavier than one of the kittens. I carried the basket, and the mother cat came running along behind me.

The logging camp was just a camp when we got there; but in two weeks it was a whole small town. Jacqueline and I had a tent while the town was being built; it was like a honeymoon, M'sieu'. We hardly saw O'Banion. He was off in the woods, laying out his cut for the winter. When he did come to camp, it was as if a tornado had come. He was like a horse galloping. Where he was, men jumped.

The town seemed to jump, too. Before we knew it, it was full-grown. It had ten bunkhouses on a main street, a mess house, a store, six big log stables, O'Banion's office with a clerk's counter for me and a room behind where he slept, and the house he had promised us. And everything was red. It is still called Red Camp.

Jacqueline loved our house, in spite of the red paint smeared on the logs. It had a porch with a railing of split poles, a yard, and even a picket fence. Sometimes O'Banion ate supper with us there, but not often. He was always doing things, always hurrying. Even now I do not know when he made love to her. I suppose it was nights, in the winter. In the winter it was different.

All day I was busy in the office, and at night I must be in the company store. O'Banion would not let me have Jacqueline with me in the office or in the store, either; it was not good, he said, for a woman to be much with the men in a logging camp. I know now that many nights when I could see O'Banion's head through the office window, from where I worked in the store across the street, it was not O'Banion's head at all, but the head of some man he had paid to sit there at his desk, to fool me.

and the tiger cat's four kittens, and four cats that belonged to the camp cook. They all stayed with me in the store, and when I was not busy I taught them tricks. The tiger cat was the smart one. All of them followed me, but the old mother cat would come like a dog when I whistled, and when I snapped my fingers she would leap up on my shoulder and ride there. Always she rode home on my shoulder.

One day I made a collar for her and cut a name-plate for it out of a tin can, and wrote on it with a knife: "This cat is the property of Mme Jacqueline Tetu." We laughed much when I took the cat home with her new collar.

Sometimes the cats were a nuisance. If it had not been that four of them belonged to the cook, I think he would have killed them all, because they robbed the snares he set for rabbits in the woods along the river. The cook said the cats would go wild, living there in the wilderness, especially after they had tasted the live meat of rabbits. Cats left behind in abandoned logging camps often grew big and fierce, like wild beasts, he said. I used to help him set more snares, so that he would not be too angry when the cats ate the rabbits out of some of them.

Once, when we found deer tracks in the snow, we made a big snare and caught a small doe; there were six cats on it when we came in the morning, and we had to beat them off with pine branches while they snarled at us. But at other times, they followed me like a pack of dogs.

All winter the logs piled up on the river bank. With that O'Banion driving them, I think the crew cut more trees than so many men ever cut before. Then, when the snow melted and the ice went out, the logs went too. O'Banion and the whole camp went with the log drive; only Jacqueline and I stayed behind. He told us to stay until he came back. Then, he said, we would close up the town and go away for ever. He had cut all the timber worth cutting for miles round.

He was away more than a month. I was very happy. We wandered in the woods, Jacqueline and I, with the cats following us. Often she said how wonderful it was that a poor man should become rich in a single winter, as O'Banion had done. Once, when I told her that we had made much money too, she said, "Pouf!" like that; it made me wish I was like O'Banion.

anything but Jacqueline.

He said he had brought the horse for her to ride because the road was so rough the rest of the way. He came running, and just then the wagon went up over a boulder, almost as big as the wheel; it did not tip over, but it threw Jacqueline out. She fell right into O'Banion's arms, with her arms sticking out so that they went around his neck.

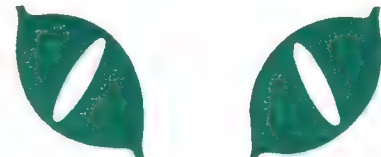
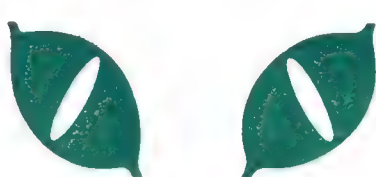
I was a fool, certainly. When the store windows became thick with frost, I would melt it off with my hand so I could look across at our house where Jacqueline was, and I would talk to the cats and tell them how much I loved her.

The cats liked the big counter in the store, with the stove warming it. There were nine cats altogether—the tiger cat that was Jacqueline's wedding present,

I was alone in the store the day he came back.

I had my back to the door, and I did not hear him when he came in. He was just behind me when he said: "Hello, there, little Tom Tit," and laughed.

I turned my head and saw his fist coming. It struck me on the chin, and everything went black. When the blackness went away, he was sitting on the





counter looking at me.

"Hello, Tom Tit," he said. "I've come to take your wife away from you."

It was just as if he had hit me again.

"She wants to go with me," he said. "She wants a man, a big man, a rich man, not a little Tom Tit."

I tried to say something. He got me by my shirt and jerked me up.

"Do you mean you object?" he asked me. "You mean you don't believe she wants to go? Come along." I struck at him with all my might, but he only laughed. "Come along. She is waiting down the road. She will tell you herself."

I went with him down the road towards L'Ascension. When we came to the poplar woods at the edge of the camp, I saw Jacqueline's coat lying at the edge of the wheel tracks.

"Pick it up, Tom Tit," he said. "That's all you'll ever have of her."

I do not know why I picked it up. I did. I bent over and took hold of it. It was caught on something. I tugged at it, and suddenly something hit me on the chest and pulled me off the ground and held me dangling there, three or four feet above the road.

He had set a snare for me and baited it with my Jacqueline's coat. I hung there, with the rope of the snare round my chest and the coat still in my hand, and O' Banion laughed at me.

"We're going away," he told me. "You go back to your cats; and when I hold her in my arms, at night, I'll think of you, Tom Tit."

"I'll die here!" I screamed at him. I did not care whether I died or not; I was already dead, inside.

"That would be a pity," he said. "That would be a sad accident—for Tom Tit, who snares rabbit and deer, to get himself caught in one of his own snares and die." He went off down the road.

I do not know how long I hung there. I fought to get loose from the snare, but it held me. The harder I struggled, the faster the snare made me dangle and dance in the air. I could not get loose.

And then the cats came. I remembered the deer we had caught in our snare, partly eaten. I was not afraid to die. I wanted to die. But that was an awful way.

The cats sat down in a circle under me and looked up. The tiger cat was just in front of me. I saw her collar, and I thought of something.

I snapped my fingers. She crouched down and jumped. I was four feet off

did not catch him. I found where he had tied two horses, but they were gone. I ran until I could run no more; I walked until I fell; I crawled until I lay still. After a while I got up and walked on again. I followed them to L'Ascension, and on to the railway; I followed them to Montreal, but O'Banion was not there.

At his bank, where they knew my name because it had been on his accounts, they told me he had gone to New York, and from there he was going to Paris for the summer. I could not ask anyone whether my Jacqueline had gone with him. I did not want anyone to know, if she had. You see, I loved Jacqueline. I wanted her back.

I did not know what to do but wait.

Finally, they told me at the bank that O'Banion was on the way back. I was on the platform when he got off the train, and I saw a woman with him. But the woman was not Jacqueline. She was a small woman with bright gold hair, and she clung to O'Banion's arm as if she owned him.

Something shouted inside me: "Thom, you can have her back now!"

I started towards him, to ask him where he had left Jacqueline. And then I saw her. She, too, was waiting there on the platform. Her face was thin and sad; her eyes, that had had the stars in them, were like dead eyes. She saw O'Banion and the girl, and she did not see me. For so long as the heart can stand still without death coming, she looked at O'Banion. His eyes passed over her as if he had never seen her, and he went by.

"Jacqueline!" I called to her, and started to run to her. She did not hear me. She, too, began to run. There was a train coming in. She ran in front of it.

So I took her back home to L'Ascension and buried her in the churchyard here. Father Clement knows. When it was over, I told him I was going to kill O'Banion. But Father Clement said: "No, my son, you must not do that. He must be punished, and he will be. But God will punish him, not you."

I asked him if he was sure God would punish O'Banion, and he said he was sure. After that, there is not much.

I sold the little house in the bend by the river, and bought traps and a gun and food, and went back into the mountains to the camp that O'Banion had built. Always since then I have lived

water. Anything that I catch in traps on the ground, or in snares or deadfalls, the cats eat before I can come. When I went back to Red Camp, there were just nine cats. I think there are a hundred now. Not all of them stay with me. Some of them are wild like the lynx. But the rest run with me in the woods and sit round the fire at night, their eyes like green fires in a circle, two by two.

All winter I trap. When spring comes, I take the furs to Montreal and sell them, and when I have taken my money to the bank, I go to see whether God has punished O'Banion yet. Every spring I have found that he is richer. Every spring almost I find there is a new woman in his house.

And I find something else, too. Every spring almost there is some man whose heart is dead inside him, like mine. This O'Banion, he does not take a woman just to have her for himself. No. He would rather take some woman from a man who loves her than take a more beautiful woman who is free to give herself. He is a devil, that man.

How do I know these things? From his servants. They talk to the queer trapper who always has money for wine. I know, but I do nothing. I keep my promise to Father Clement. Often I thought God must have forgotten or He would not let this man do so much evil.

Then, last week, was time for me to go again to Montreal. I put into packs the furs I had taken in the winter and loaded them on my sledge and started for L'Ascension. When I came cut through the poplar woods where O'Banion had caught me in his snare, I saw horses on the trail across the valley.

I dragged the sledge into the woods and hid it, and I hid myself beside the trail to watch. The horses came closer, and I saw O'Banion!

He was like he was the day Jacqueline and I rode over the mountains and he met us on horseback. His head was bare and his red hair was tossed back. A woman rode beside him—a young, beautiful woman, with black hair and a soft, red mouth. He was talking to her and laughing. Behind them rode another man on a fine horse, and after him, three other men who looked like guides, leading pack horses.

They passed. I knelt where I was, trembling. Inside me something said: "God has brought O'Banion back to punish him where his sin began."

I followed them after a while, slipping from tree to tree. They rode straight



the ground, but she jumped as high as my chest, and I caught her. I took off the collar, and with my nails I pried off the name plate I had made for it from the tin can. When I had it off, I put it behind me and sawed the rope with it until the snare broke and let me down.

And then I ran. I ran down the road towards L'Ascension, meaning to catch up with O'Banion and kill him. But I

there with my cats.

You see, I was not sure God would punish that man. I thought to myself: God may forget. So I stayed there, in the place where O'Banion had taken Jacqueline, so that I should not forget.

In the winter I set traps. The trapping is good there, except that I can trap only beaver and otter and fishes, for which I can set the traps under

into Red Camp, and O'Banion pointed to the empty buildings and called out: "Look, here is where I made my start. I built this town just for one season, and left it. I thought I was rich, but I had just begun."

They made a camp in the pine woods down by the river, almost where I snared the deer years before. I crept up close in the scrub and watched and listened.



They put up two fine tents, one for O'Banion and one for the woman and the other man, so I knew the other man was her husband. I waited. Night came. They ate supper and sat by the fire and talked. I heard O'Banion say:

"I suppose you think I am a fool, dragging you two out here. But that last deal was my biggest and my last—absolutely my last. I've done enough work. Now I'm going to play. And I wanted to celebrate my last triumph here, where I had my first one."

"I think it's splendid," the woman said.

The man said "Splendid!" too.

"To-morrow," O'Banion said then, "we'll get some hunting. We'll take two of the guides, Hubert. Anne will be safe here with old Ba'tiste—he's the cook, Anne."

"I'll wait," the woman told him, and laughed. O'Banion laughed, too. And then I knew that the man called Hubert would be a long time coming back from the hunting trip. Perhaps Hubert would be shot in the leg, accidentally. Or the guide would pretend to get lost and keep him wandering for days, while O'Banion came back to the woman.

I thought to myself: Father Clement was wrong. God *has* forgotten about O'Banion. I did not care about the woman. She was too willing. You could tell it by her laugh, and by the way she watched O'Banion. But her husband sat there by the fire with his hand just resting against her knee, as if he loved her so much he felt that he must touch her. After a while he wanted to go to bed.

"Run along," she said to him. "I want to sit here and talk to Darrell."

The man Hubert bent and kissed the top of her head as he went by. When he stooped to go into his tent, his back was towards them and she leaned forward and kissed O'Banion on the mouth. They sat there a long time after that.

In the underbrush there were little rustlings. I knew what they were. The cats were looking for me. I could see their eyes when the glow of the fire touched them. They crept in close, until there was a circle of them, two by two. The woman noticed them and screamed

She said: "They're like ghosts. What are they, Darrell—ghosts of your past?"

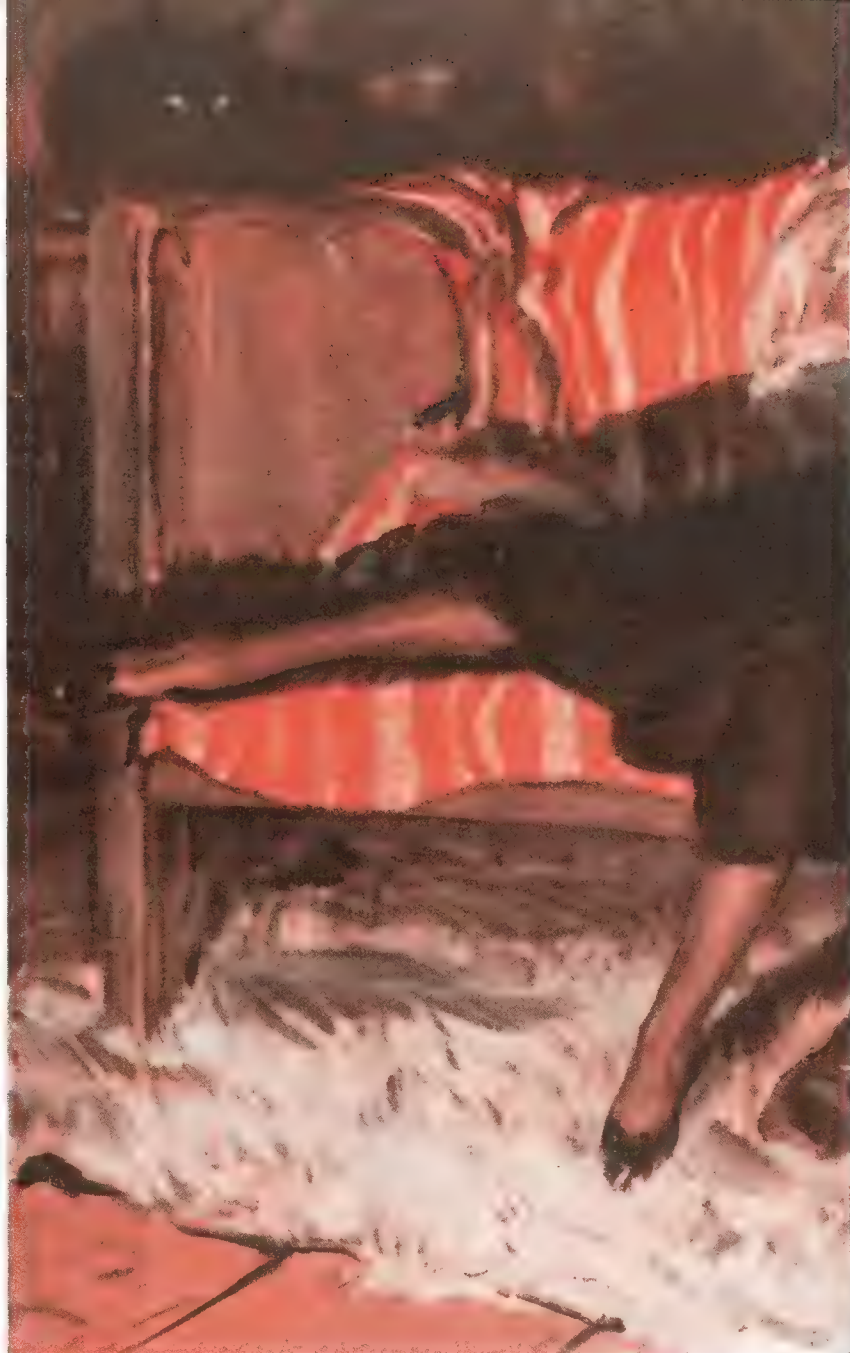
And he said: "Ghosts don't have green eyes. They're just cats."

"Cats?" she asked. And he said: "Yes, just cats. They're descendants of cats left behind when the camp was abandoned. They go wild—real wild cats."

She made a shuddery noise, and said she wanted to go to bed. O'Banion kissed her and said, "To-morrow." And she said: "To-morrow."

She went into her husband's tent, and O'Banion went into his. I went up and sat on the doorstep of the house that had been Jacqueline's and mine. I thought about what to do. I wondered whether it was right to let him do to this woman's husband what he had done to me. I thought: Perhaps God means me to stop him.

And then I thought that if I set a trap for O'Banion where he could avoid it if God meant him to avoid it, I would not be breaking my promise to Father Clement. So I went to sleep, in the room



where I had slept with Jacqueline not knowing that O'Banion was tempting her, and slept until daylight. Then I went again into the thicket to watch.

After breakfast, O'Banion and Hubert and two of the guides went off on their horses, with rifles. I wondered what the woman would do with the cook, Ba'tiste. In about an hour I saw Ba'tiste saddle his horse and ride away, down the trail towards L'Ascension. I said to myself that O'Banion had paid him to do that.

I had a gun in my hand, and I came out of the thicket very quietly, so that the woman did not see me until I was just behind her. Then I said, "*Bo' jour*," and pointed the gun so that she looked right at it when she turned around. She screamed, and I told her not to be afraid.

"Who are you?" she asked. And I said: "I am Thom Tetu. A long time ago Darrell O'Banion took my wife here in Red Camp, the way he intends to take you." She screamed again, and I said: "Those were ghosts last night—those eyes. Those cats are kittens from the cat I gave my wife for a wedding

present."

Then I tied her hands behind her and made her walk up to the house where I had lived with Jacqueline, and up the stairs to the bedroom. There I tied her feet, too, and left her. Then I went back to the tents, and on a tall poplar that stood in front of her tent I made a snare. I hid the loop of it in the grass just at the tent door and fastened the rope to the fastenings of the door so that anyone who opened the tent would set off the snare.

If O'Banion came back alone and went to the woman's tent, he would be caught. If he did not, he would escape. After that, I went to the hill above the town and waited for O'Banion to come back.

I waited all day. Then, when it was almost dark, I saw O'Banion coming across the ridge, far away, alone. I said to myself that I had promised Father Clement that I would not punish O'Banion. I said to myself that I would do more than that: I would warn O'Banion that God was waiting to punish him.





*I was very happy. Often Jacqueline said how wonderful it was that a poor man should become rich in a single winter.*



ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
HAROLD VON SCHMIDT

I was sitting on a rotting stump. In the dark it was beginning to glow, as rotten wood does sometimes at night.

I reached down and tore out some of it with my hands and smeared it on my face. I rubbed it into my hair and my beard, as you see it now, until I knew that in the dark my face must glow like the face of a ghost. Then I ran down into the town and waited for O'Banion.

I stood there with the cats around me as he came riding in. I knew he must see the eyes and my face. He slowed up his horse. I spoke to him.

"Go back, O'Banion," I said. "God is waiting to punish you."

He said something, down in his throat. "Do you remember Jacqueline?" I asked him.

"Who are you?" I heard him ask, and I said: "I am Thom Tetu—little Tom Tit, whom you hanged in the snare."

Then there was a flash and a crack and a pain in my side. I knew he had shot me. I heard the horse's hoofs go over me where I fell. Then I did not know anything for a while.

When I could hear things again, I

heard O'Banion crying out, very loud. I got up thinking that perhaps he had not hurt me very much. I was dizzy, but I managed to get to the other end of the town. I went to the tents by the river and saw O'Banion hanging in the snare.

He saw my face with the glow on it and cried to me to help him. I said: "I warned you that God was waiting to punish you if you went to that woman. The ghosts of your old sin have found you."

He began to make noises in his throat as if he were choking; but I looked at the snare, and it was only round his chest. I went back to our house and sat on the doorstep. By and by the cats came and sat down round me waiting for me to get them something to eat. But I had nothing for them. After a while they went away. A long time after that—O'Banion began to scream.

I think I went to sleep, or I fainted. I felt very sick. When I was awake again, it was morning, and there was no more screaming.

I went down to the river and got the

woman's horse and brought it to the door. I untied the woman and told her to get on the horse and let him take her back to L'Ascension.

She said: "Where is he? Where is he?"

And I said: "God punished him. You had better go."

Eudore Savard put down his notebook and he looked at Thom Tetu, slumped among the blankets. Father

Clement motioned to him to go out.

The French-Iroquois went into the hall, where the woman with the black hair was sobbing to herself. Outside, there was another noise—a droning noise. Eudore opened the front door and closed it behind him. By and by he came back.

"The plane from St. Jovite," he said curtly to the woman. "Father Clement asked them to send it, to search for your husband. Until to-day, much fog. To-day, they found him. That guide, he tripped on a stump, he says, and shot your husband in the leg."

The woman with the black hair and the soft, red mouth got up quickly and put both her hands on Savard's arm. "Does he know?"

Eudore Savard shook his head.

"You will not tell him?" the red mouth begged.

Savard shook his head again. "Father Clement says that is not *our* business!"

"Oh!" The woman's hands left his arm and went swiftly to her throat. "Oh!"



# The Looking-Glass

by EDITH WHARTON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARSHALL FRANTZ AND D. L. MAYS



MRS. ATTLEE had never been able to understand why there was any harm in giving people a little encouragement when they needed it.

Sitting back in her comfortable arm-chair by the fire, her working days over, and her strong masseuse's hands lying swollen and powerless on her knees, she was at leisure to turn the problem over, and ponder it as there had never been time to do before.

Mrs. Attlee was so infirm now that, when her widowed daughter-in-law was away for the day, her granddaughter Moyra Attlee had to stay with her.

"You'd be surprised, you know, my dear, to find how discouraged the grand people get, in those big houses with all the help, and the silver dinner plates, and a bell always handy if the fire wants poking, or the pet dog asks for a drink. 'And what'd a masseuse be good for, if she didn't jolly up their minds a little along with their muscles?' as Doctor Welbridge used to say to me many a time, when he'd given me a difficult patient. And he always gave me the most difficult," she added proudly.

She paused, aware—for even now little escaped her—that Moyra had ceased to listen, but accepting the fact resignedly, as she did most things in the slow decline of her days.

It's a fine afternoon, she reflected, and likely she's fidgety because there's a new film on.

She relapsed into silence, following her thoughts; but presently, as happens with old people, they began again to utter themselves aloud.

"And I hope I'm a good Catholic, as I said to Father Divott the other day, and at peace with heaven, if ever I was took suddenly—but no matter what happens I've got to risk my punishment

for the wrong I did to Mrs. Clingsland, because as long as I've never repented it there's no use telling Father Divott about it. Is there?"

Mrs. Attlee heaved an introspective sigh. Like many humble persons of her kind and creed, she had a vague idea that a sin unrevealed was, as far as the consequences went, a sin uncommitted; and this conviction had often helped her in the difficult task of reconciling doctrine and practice.

Moyra Attlee turned an astonished glance on her grandmother. "Mrs. Clingsland?" she echoed in surprise. "A wrong you did to Mrs. Clingsland?"

Hitherto she had lent an inattentive ear to her grandmother's ramblings; but Mrs. Attlee had a gift for evoking in a few words scenes of half-understood opulence and leisure, like a guide leading a stranger through the gallery of a palace in the twilight, and now and then lifting a lamp to a shimmering Rembrandt or a jewelled Rubens; and it was particularly when she mentioned Mrs. Clingsland that Moyra caught these luminous glimpses.

Mrs. Clingsland had always been something more than a name to the Attlee family. They knew—though they did not know why—that it was through her help that Grandmother Attlee had been able, years ago, to buy the little house at Montclair, with a patch of garden behind it, where, all through the depression, she had held out, thanks to fortunate investments made on the advice of Mrs. Clingsland's great friend, the banker.

"She had so many friends, and they were all high-up people, you understand. Many's the time she'd say to me: 'Cora'—think of the loveliness of her calling me Cora—'Cora, I'm going

to buy some stock on Mr. Stoner's advice; Mr. Stoner of the National Union Bank, you know. He's getting me in on the ground floor, as they say, and if you want to come in with me, why, come along.' And, as it turned out, those shares have kept their heads above water all through the bad years, and now I think they'll see me through, and be there when I'm gone, to help out you children."

To-day Moyra Attlee heard the revered name with a new interest. The phrase, "the wrong I did to Mrs. Clingsland," had struck through her listlessness, rousing her to sudden curiosity. What could her grandmother mean by saying she had done a wrong to the benefactress whose bounties she was never tired of recording? Moyra believed her grandmother to be a very good woman—certainly she had been wonderfully generous in all her dealings with her children and grandchildren—and it seemed incredible that, if there had been one grave lapse in her life, it should have taken the form of an injury to Mrs. Clingsland.

"How can you say you ever did harm





*What she wanted, and couldn't do without, was the gaze of men struck dumb by her beauty.*

*That eternal liar—  
a woman's mirror—  
at last reveals the  
unembellished truth*

to a friend like Mrs. Clingsland, Gran?"

Mrs. Attlee's eyes grew sharp behind her spectacles, and she fixed them half distrustfully on the girl's face. But in a moment she seemed to recover herself. "Not harm, I don't say; I'll never think I harmed her. All I wanted was to help. But when you try to help too many people at once, the devil sometimes takes note of it. You see, there's quotas nowadays for everything, doing good included, my darling."

Moyra made an impatient movement. She did not care to hear her grandmother philosophise. "Well—but you said just now you did a wrong to Mrs.

Clingsland."

Mrs. Attlee's sharp eyes seemed to draw back behind a mist of age. She sat silent, her pale puffed hands lying heavily one upon the other in their tragic uselessness.

"What would you have done, I wonder," she began suddenly, "if you'd ha' come in on her that morning, and seen her laying in her lovely great bed, with the lace a yard deep on the sheets, and her face buried in the pillows, so I knew she was crying? Would you have opened your bag same as usual, and got out your coconut cream and talcum powder, and all the rest of it, and

waited there like a statue till she turned over to you; or'd you have gone up to her, and turned her softly round, like you would a baby, and said to her: 'Now, my dear, you can tell Cora Attlee what's the trouble'? Well, that's what I did, anyhow; and there she was, with her face streaming with tears, and looking like a martyred saint on an altar, and when I said to her: 'Come, now, you tell me, and it'll help you,' she just sobbed out: 'Nothing can ever help me, now I've lost it.'"

"Lost what?" I said, thinking first of her boy, the Lord help me, though I'd heard him whistling on the stairs as



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I went up; but she said: 'My beauty, Cora. I saw it suddenly slipping out of the door from me this morning.'

"Well, at that I had to laugh, and half angrily, too. 'Your beauty!' I said to her. 'And is that all? And me that thought it was your husband, or your son, or your fortune even. If it's only your beauty, can't I give it back to you with these hands of mine? But what are you saying to me about beauty, with that seraph's face looking up at me this minute?'"

"Well, was it true?" Moyra broke in, impatient and yet curious.

"True that she'd lost her beauty?" Mrs. Attlee paused to consider. "Do you know how it is, sometimes when you're doing a bit of fine darning, sitting by the window in the afternoon; and one minute it's full daylight, and your needle seems to find the way of itself; and the next minute you say: 'Is it my eyes?' because the work seems blurred; and presently you see it's the daylight going, stealing away from your corner, though there's plenty left overhead? Well—it was that way with her."

But Moyra had never done fine darning, or strained her eyes in fading light, and she intervened again: "Well, what did she do?"

Mrs. Attlee once more reflected. "Why, she made me tell her every morning it wasn't true; and every morning she believed me a little less. And she asked everybody in the house, beginning with her husband, poor man—him so bewildered when you asked him anything outside of his business or his club or his horses, and never noticing any difference in her looks since the day he'd led her home as his bride, thirty years before, maybe.

"But there—nothing he could have said, if he'd had the wit to say it, would have made any difference to her. From the day she saw the first little line around her eyes she thought of herself as an old woman, and the thought never left her for more than a few minutes at a time. Oh, when she was dressed up, and laughing, and receiving company, then I don't say the faith in her beauty wouldn't come back to her, and go to her head like champagne; but it wore off quicker than champagne, and I've seen her run upstairs with the foot of a girl, and then, before she'd tossed off her finery, sit down in front of one of her big looking-glasses—it was looking-glasses everywhere in her room—and stare and stare till the tears ran down over her powder."

"Oh, well, I suppose it's always hateful growing old," said Moyra.

Mrs. Attlee smiled retrospectively. "How can I say that, when my own old age has been made so peaceful by all her goodness to me?"

"And yet you tell me you behaved wrong to her. How am I to know what you mean?"

Moyra's grandmother made no answer. She closed her eyes, and leaned her head against the little cushion behind her neck. Moyra reflected that she was probably falling asleep, and that when she woke she would not remember what she had been about to reveal.

"It's not much fun sitting here, if you

can't keep awake long enough to tell me what you mean about Mrs. Clingsland," she grumbled.

Mrs. Attlee roused herself with a start.

Well (she began), you know what happened in the war—I mean, the way all the fine ladies, and the poor shabby ones too, took to running to the mediums and the clairvoyants, or whatever the stylish folk call 'em. The women had to have news of their men; and they were made to pay high enough for it—and the price paid wasn't only money, either! There was a fair lot of swindlers and blackmailers in the business, there was. I'd sooner have trusted a gypsy at a fair. But the women just *had* to go to them.

Well, my dear, I'd always had a way of seeing things; from the cradle, even. I don't mean reading the tea leaves, or dealing the cards; that's for the kitchen. No, no; I mean feeling there's things about you, behind you, whispering over your shoulder; once my mother, on the Connemara hills, saw the leprechauns at dusk. Well, when I used to go from one grand house to another, to give my massage and face treatment, I got more and more sorry for those poor wretches the soothsaying swindlers were dragging the money out of for a pack of lies.

And one day I couldn't stand it any longer, and though I knew the Church was against it, when I saw one lady nearly crazy because for months she'd had no news of her boy at the front, I said to her: "If you'll come over to my place to-morrow, I might have a word for you." And the wonder of it was that I *had*! For that night I dreamed a message came saying there was good news for her, and the next day, sure enough, she had a cable, telling her her son had escaped from a German camp.

After that the ladies came in, flocks—in flocks fairly. You're too young to remember, child. Your mother could tell you. Only she wouldn't, because after a bit the priest got wind of it, and then it had to stop, so she won't even talk of it any more. But I always said: How could I help it? For I *did* see things, and hear things, at that time. Of course the ladies were supposed to come just for the face treatment, and was I to blame if I kept seeing things they wanted me to see? Poor souls!

It's no matter now, for I made it all straight with Father Divott years ago; and now nobody comes after me any more, as you can see for yourself.

But with Mrs. Clingsland—well, that was different. To begin with, she was the patient I liked best. There was nothing she wouldn't do for you, if ever for a minute you could get her to stop thinking of herself, and that's saying a good deal, for a rich lady. Money's an armour, you see; and there's few cracks in it. But Mrs. Clingsland was a loving nature, if only anybody'd shown her how to love. And wouldn't she have been surprised if you'd told her that! Her that thought she was living up to her chin in love and love-making.

But when lines began to come about her eyes, she didn't believe in it any more. And she had to be always hunting for new people to tell her she was as beautiful as ever because she wore the others out, for ever asking: "Don't you

think I'm beginning to go off a little?" Finally, fewer and fewer came to the house, and as far as a poor masseuse like me can judge, I didn't much fancy the looks of those that did; and I saw Mr. Clingsland didn't either.

But there was the children, you'll say. And she did love her children in a way; only it wasn't their way. The girl, who was a good bit the eldest, took after her father: a plain face and plain words; dogs and horses and athletics. With her mother she was cold and scared; so her mother was cold and scared with her. The boy was delicate when he was little, so she could curl him up, and put him into black velvet, like that boy in the book—little Lord Something. But when his long legs grew out of the breeches, and they sent him to school, she said he wasn't her own little cuddly baby any more; and it upsets a growing boy to hear himself talked about like that.

She had good friends left, of course; mostly elderly ladies of her own age—for she *was* elderly now—who used to drop in often for a gossip; but, bless your heart, they weren't much help, for what she wanted, and couldn't do without, was the gaze of men struck dumb by her beauty. And that was what she couldn't get any longer, unless she paid for it.

Even so—she was too quick and clever to be humbugged long by the kind that tried to get things out of her. How she used to laugh at the old double-chinners trotting round to the night clubs with their boy friends. She laughed at old ladies in love; and yet she couldn't bear to be out of love, though she knew she was getting to be an old lady herself.

Well, I remember another patient of mine, who'd never had much looks beyond what you can buy, laughing to me one day about Mrs. Clingsland, about her dread of old age and her craze for admiration. And as I listened, I suddenly thought:







*The dread of old age and the longing for admiration became the only things in her life.*

out of a ballroom, all flowers and chandeliers, into the winter night and the snow." And I had to bite the words back, not to say them to my patient.

Mrs. Clingsland brightened up a little when her son grew up and went to college. She used to go over and see him now and again; or he'd come home for the holidays. And he used to take her out for lunch, or to dance at those cabaret places; and when the head waiters took her for his sweetheart she'd talk about it for a week. But one day a hall porter said: "Better hurry up, mister. There's your mother waiting for you over there, looking clean fagged out"; and after that she didn't go out with him so much.

For a time she used to get some comfort out of telling me about her early triumphs; and I used to listen patiently, because I knew it was safer for her to talk to me than to the flatterers who were beginning to get round her.

"Why, we don't either of us know anything about what a beautiful woman suffers when she loses her beauty. For you and me, and thousands like us,

beginning to grow old is like going from a bright warm room to one a little less warm and bright; but to a beauty like Mrs. Clingsland it's like being pushed

You mustn't think of her, though, as an unkind woman. She was friendly to her husband, and friendly to her children; but they meant less and less to her. What she wanted was a looking-glass to stare into; and when her own people took enough notice of her to serve as looking-glasses, which wasn't often, she didn't much fancy what she saw reflected there. I think this was the worst time of her life. She lost a tooth; she began to dye her hair; she went into retirement to have her face lifted, and then got frightened, and came out again looking like a ghost, with a pouch under one eye, where they'd begun the treatment.

I began to be really worried about her then. She got bitter towards everybody, and I seemed to be the only person she could talk out to. She used to keep me by her for hours, going over the same thing again and again; how, when she was young and came into a ballroom or a restaurant, everybody turned to look at her. It was the truth, I dare say, but that was over.

Well, what could I say to her? She'd heard it all often enough. But there were people prowling about in the background that I didn't like the look of; people, you understand, who live on weak women that can't grow old. One day she showed me a love letter. She said she didn't know the man who'd sent it; but she knew about him. He was a Count Somebody; a foreigner. She laughed and tore the letter up. Another came from him and I saw that too—but I didn't see her tear it up.

"Oh, I know what he's after," she said. "Men like that are always looking out for silly old women with money. Ah," says she, "it was different in old times! I remember one day I'd gone into a florist's to buy some violets, and I saw a young fellow there; well, perhaps he was a little younger than me but I still looked like a girl. And when he saw me his face turned so white I thought he was going to faint. I bought my violets; and as I went out a violet dropped from the bunch. I saw him stoop and pick it up. . . .

"Well," she says, "a few days after that I met him at a dinner, and it turned out he was the son of a friend of mine, a woman older than myself, who'd married abroad."

She lay back with her eyes closed, and a quiet smile on her poor tormented face. "I didn't know it then, but I suppose that was the only time I've ever been in love." For a while she didn't say anything more, and I noticed the tears beginning to roll down her cheeks. "Tell me about it, now do, you poor soul," I says; for I thought, this is better for her than fandangoing with that oily count whose letter she hasn't torn up.

"There's so little to tell," she said. "We met only four or five times, and then Harry went down on the *Titanic*."

"Mercy," says I, "and was it all those years ago?"

"The years don't make any difference, Cora. The way he looked at me, I know no one ever worshipped me as he did."

"And did he tell you so?" I went on, humouring her.

"Some things don't have to be told,"



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says she, with the smile of a bride. "If only he hadn't died, Cora! It's the sorrowing for him that's made me old before my time." (Before her time! And her well over fifty!)

Well, a day or two after that I got a shock. Coming out of Mrs. Clingsland's front door, as I was going into it, I met a woman I'd know among a million if I was to meet her again in hell—where I will, I know, if I don't mind my steps. You see, Moyra, though I broke years ago with all that crystal reading and table rapping, I was mixed up in it for a time, and I knew, by sight at any rate, most of the big mediums and their touts. And this woman on the doorstep was a tout. I knew cases where she'd sucked people dry selling them the news they wanted. All of a sudden it came to me that I'd heard it said that she kept a foreign count, who was sucking *her* dry, and I gave one jump home to my own place, and sat down to think it over.

I saw well enough what was going to happen. Either she'd persuade my poor lady that the count *was* mad over her beauty, and get a hold over her that way; or else—and this was worse—she'd make Mrs. Clingsland talk, and get at the story of the poor young man who was drowned, and bring her messages from him; and that might go on for ever.

I says to myself, if that woman gets hold of Mrs. Clingsland, why, one way or another, she'll bleed her white, and then leave her without help or comfort. I'd seen that happen, and I wasn't going to let it happen to my poor lady. What I was after was to make her believe in herself again, and by the next day I'd thought my plan out, and set it going.

It wasn't so easy, neither; and I sometimes wonder at my nerve. I'd reckoned it out that the other woman would have to work the stunt of the young man who was drowned, because I was pretty sure Mrs. Clingsland would shy away from the count. Well, then, thinks I, I'll work the same stunt myself—but how?

You see, dearie, those big people, when they talk and write to each other, they use lovely words we ain't used to; and I was afraid if I began to bring messages to her, I'd word them wrong, and she'd suspect something. I knew I could work it the first day or the second; but after that I wasn't so sure. But there was no time to lose, and when I went back to her next morning I said: "A queer thing happened to me last night. It must have been the way you spoke to me about that gentleman—the one on the *Titanic*. Making me see him as clear as if he was in the room with us"—and at

that I had her sitting up in bed with her great eyes burning into me like gimlets.

"Oh, Cora, perhaps he *is*! Oh, tell me quickly what happened!"

"Well, when I was laying in my bed last night something came to me from him. It was a word he was telling me to bring you . . ."

I had to wait then, she was crying so

But it's wonderful, as Father Divott says, how Providence sometimes seems to be listening behind the door. That night when I got home, I found a message from a patient, asking me to go to see a poor young fellow she'd befriended when she was better off—he'd been her children's tutor, I believe. He was down and out, and dying. Well, I went; and



*Suddenly it came to me*

hard, until she could listen to me again.

The message I'd hit on for that first day was easy enough. I said he'd told me to tell her he'd always loved her. It went down her throat like honey, and she just lay there tasting it. But after a while she lifted her head. "Then why didn't he tell me so?" says she.

"Ah," says I, "I'll have to try to reach him again, and ask him that."

And that day she fairly drove me off on my other jobs, for fear I'd be late getting home, and too tired to hear him if he came again. "And he *will* come, Cora; I know he will! And you must write down everything he says, for fear you'll forget a single word."

Well, that was a new difficulty. Writing wasn't ever my strong point; and when it came to finding the words for a young gentleman in love, you might as well have asked me to write a Chinese dictionary.

I saw at once why he hadn't kept a job. Poor fellow, it was the drink; and now he was dying of it.

He was a highly educated gentleman, and as quick as a flash, before I'd half explained, he told me what to say to Mrs. Clingsland, and wrote out the message for me. I remember it now: "He was so blinded by your beauty that he couldn't speak, and when he saw you the next time, at that dinner, he felt farther away from you than ever. He walked the streets till morning, and then went home, and wrote you a letter; but he didn't care to send it, after all."

Mrs. Clingsland swallowed that down like champagne. Blinded by her beauty! Struck dumb by love of her! Oh, but that's what she'd been thirsting for all these years. Only, once it had begun, she had to have more of it, and always more, and my job didn't get any easier.

Luckily, though, I had that young



## Edith Wharton

fellow to help me; and after a while, he got as much interested as I was.

But, my, what questions she asked! "Tell him, if it's true that I took his breath away that first evening at dinner, to describe to you how I was dressed. They must remember things like that even in the other world, don't you think?"

me a pencil, and I'll write it out."

That message fairly made her face burn with joy. "I knew it! I always knew it!" She flung her thin arms about me and kissed me. "Tell me again, Cora, how he said I looked the first day he saw me."

"Why, you must have looked as you look now," says I to her, "for there's

munications, or whatever they call them, and she'd been crying herself into a fever, thinking I'd made up all I'd told her.

"How do I know you're a medium, anyhow," she flung out at me with pitiful, furious eyes, "and not taking advantage of me by making up all this stuff?"



*as a great shock to think that this time the letter had really come from the dead.*

Luckily she'd described that dress to me so often that I had no difficulty about telling the young man what to say. And so it went on, and it went on, and one way or another I managed each time to have an answer that satisfied her. But one day, after Harry'd sent her a particularly lovely message from the Over There, as those people call it, she burst into tears and cried out: "Oh, why did he never say things like that to me when we were together?"

I couldn't imagine why he hadn't. Of course I knew it was all wrong and immoral, anyway; but, poor things, I don't see who it can hurt to help the love-making between a sick woman and a ghost.

Well, I told the poor young man what she wanted to know and he said: "Oh, you can tell her an evil influence came between them. Someone who was jealous, and worked against him. Here, give

twenty years fallen from your face." And so there was.

What helped me to keep on was that she'd grown so much gentler and quieter. Less impatient with the people who waited on her, more understanding with the daughter and Mr. Clingsland. And sometimes she'd say: "Cora, there must be poor souls in trouble, with nobody to hold out a hand to them; and I want you to come to me when you run across anybody like that." So I used to keep that poor young fellow well looked after. And you'll never make me believe there was anything wrong in that.

But there was a day when I found her sitting up in bed with two red spots on her thin cheeks. And all the peace had gone out of her poor face. "Why, Mrs. Clingsland, my dear, what's the matter?" I asked. But I could see well enough what it was. Somebody'd been undermining her belief in spirit com-

Well, the queer thing was that I took offence at that, not because I was afraid of being found out, but because—heaven help us!—I'd somehow come to believe in that young man Harry and his love-making and it made me angry to be treated as a fraud. But I kept my temper and my tongue, and went on with the message as if I hadn't heard her; and she was ashamed to say any more.

The quarrel between us lasted a week; and then one day, poor soul! she said, whimpering: "Cora, I can't get on without the messages you bring me. The ones I get through other people don't sound like Harry, and yours do."

I was so sorry for her then that I had hard work not to cry with her; but I kept my head, and answered quietly: "Mrs. Clingsland, I've been risking my immortal soul to get those messages through to you; and if you've found



others that can help you, so much the better for me. I'll go and make my peace with heaven this very evening."

"But the other messages don't help me, and I don't want to disbelieve in you," she sobbed out. "Only lying awake all night and turning things over, I get so miserable. I shall die if you can't prove to me that it's really Harry speaking to you."

"How can I prove it to you?" I answered.

She opened her great eyes and looked up at me; and I seemed to see the wrath of her young beauty looking out of them. "There's only one way," she whispered.

"Well," I said, "what's the way?"

"You must ask him to repeat to you that letter he wrote, and didn't dare send to me. I'll know instantly then if you're in communication with him, and if you are I'll never doubt you any more."

I laughed. "You think it's as easy as that to talk with the dead, do you?"

"I think he'll know I'm dying too, and have pity on me, and do as I ask."

I said nothing more, but packed up my things and went away.

That letter seemed to me a mountain in my path; and the poor young man, when I told him, thought so too.

"Ah, that's too difficult," he said. But he told me he'd think it over, and do his best, and I was to come back the next day if I could. "If only I knew more about her or about him. It's damn difficult, making love for a dead man to a woman you've never seen," says he.

I couldn't deny that it was; but I knew he'd do what he could.

So I went back to his room the next evening; and as I climbed the stairs I felt one of those sudden warnings that sometimes used to take me by the throat.

"It's as cold as ice on these stairs," I thought, "and I'll wager there's no one made up the fire in his room since morning." But it wasn't really the cold I was afraid of; I could tell there was worse than that waiting for me.

I pushed open the door and went in. "Well," says I, as cheerful as I could, "I've got a pint of champagne and a bowl of hot soup for you."

He didn't answer. He laid there in his bed as if he didn't see me, though his eyes were open. I tried to laugh. "Mercy!" I says. "Are you so sleepy you can't even look round to see the champagne? Hasn't that slovenly woman been in to tend to the stove for you? The room's as cold as death," I says, and at the word I stopped short. He neither moved nor spoke; and I felt that the cold came from him, and not from the empty stove. I took hold of his hand, and held the cracked looking-glass to his lips; and I knew he was gone to his Maker. I fell on my knees beside the bed. "You shan't go without a prayer, you poor fellow," I whispered to him, pulling out my beads.

But though my heart was full of mourning I durstn't pray for long, for I knew I ought to call the people of the

house. So I just muttered a prayer for the dead, and then got to my feet again. I took a look around, for I said to myself it would be better not to leave about any of those bits he'd written for me.

I looked among his few books and papers for anything about the spirit messages, and found nothing. I turned back for a last look at the poor young man, and a last blessing; and then it was, on the floor, half under the bed, I saw a sheet of paper scribbled over in pencil in his weak writing. I picked it up and, Holy Mother, it was the letter! I'd clean forgotten about it in the shock of finding him gone but I hid it away quick in my bag, and I stooped down and kissed him, and then I called the people in.

Well, I mourned the poor young man like a son, and I had a busy day arranging about the funeral with the lady that used to befriend him. And with all there was to do I never went near Mrs. Clingsland that day or the next. The day after that there was a message, saying she was very ill, and I was to come quick.

I didn't more than half believe in the illness, but I knew Mrs. Clingsland was just pining to find out if I'd got the letter, and that my only chance of keeping my hold over her was to have it ready when I went back. And if I didn't keep my hold over her, I knew what slimy hands were waiting in the dark to pull her down.

Well, the labour I had copying out that letter was so great that I didn't hardly notice what was in it; and if I thought about it at all, it was only to wonder if there oughtn't to have been more long words in it, coming from a gentleman to his lady. So with one thing and another I wasn't any too easy in my mind when I appeared again at Mrs. Clingsland's; and if ever I wished myself out of a dangerous job, my dear, I can tell you that was the day.

I went up to her room, the poor lady, and found her in bed, tossing about, her eyes blazing, and her face full of the wrinkles I'd worked so hard to rub out of it; and the sight of her softened my heart.

"Well," she said in a fever—"well, Cora, have you brought me the letter?"

I handed it to her, and then I sat down and waited, my heart in my boots. I waited a long time.

She must have read the letter very slowly, and then reread it. Once she sighed, ever so softly; and once she said: "Oh, Harry, no, no. How foolish!" Then she was still again for so long that at last I turned my head and took a stealthy look at her. And there she lay on her pillows, the letter clasped tight in her hands, and her face smoothed out the way it was years before, when I first knew her. Yes, those few lines had done more for her than all my work.

"Well?" said I, smiling a little at her.

"Oh, Cora, now at last he's spoken to me, really spoken." And the tears were running down her young cheeks.

I couldn't hardly keep back my own. The heart was so light in me. "And now you'll believe in me, ma'am, won't you?"

"I was mad ever to doubt you, Cora." She lifted the letter to her breast, and laid it there among her laces. "How did you manage to get it, you darling, you?"

Dear me, thinks I, and what if she asks me to get her another one like it, and then another? I waited a moment, and then I spoke very gravely. "It's not an easy thing, ma'am, coaxing a letter like that from the dead." And suddenly, with a start, I saw that I'd spoken the truth. It was from the dead that I'd got it.

"I can well believe it, Cora. But this is a treasure I can live on for years. Only you must tell me how I can repay you. In a hundred years I could never do enough for you," she says.

Well, that word went to my heart; but for a minute I didn't know how to answer. For it was true I'd risked my soul, and that was something she couldn't pay me for; but then maybe I'd saved hers, in getting her away from those foul people, so the whole business was more of a puzzle to me than ever. But suddenly I had a thought that made me easier.

"Well, ma'am, the day before yesterday I was with a young man about the age of—of your Harry; a poor young man, lying sick in a mean lodging-house. I used to go there and see him sometimes—"

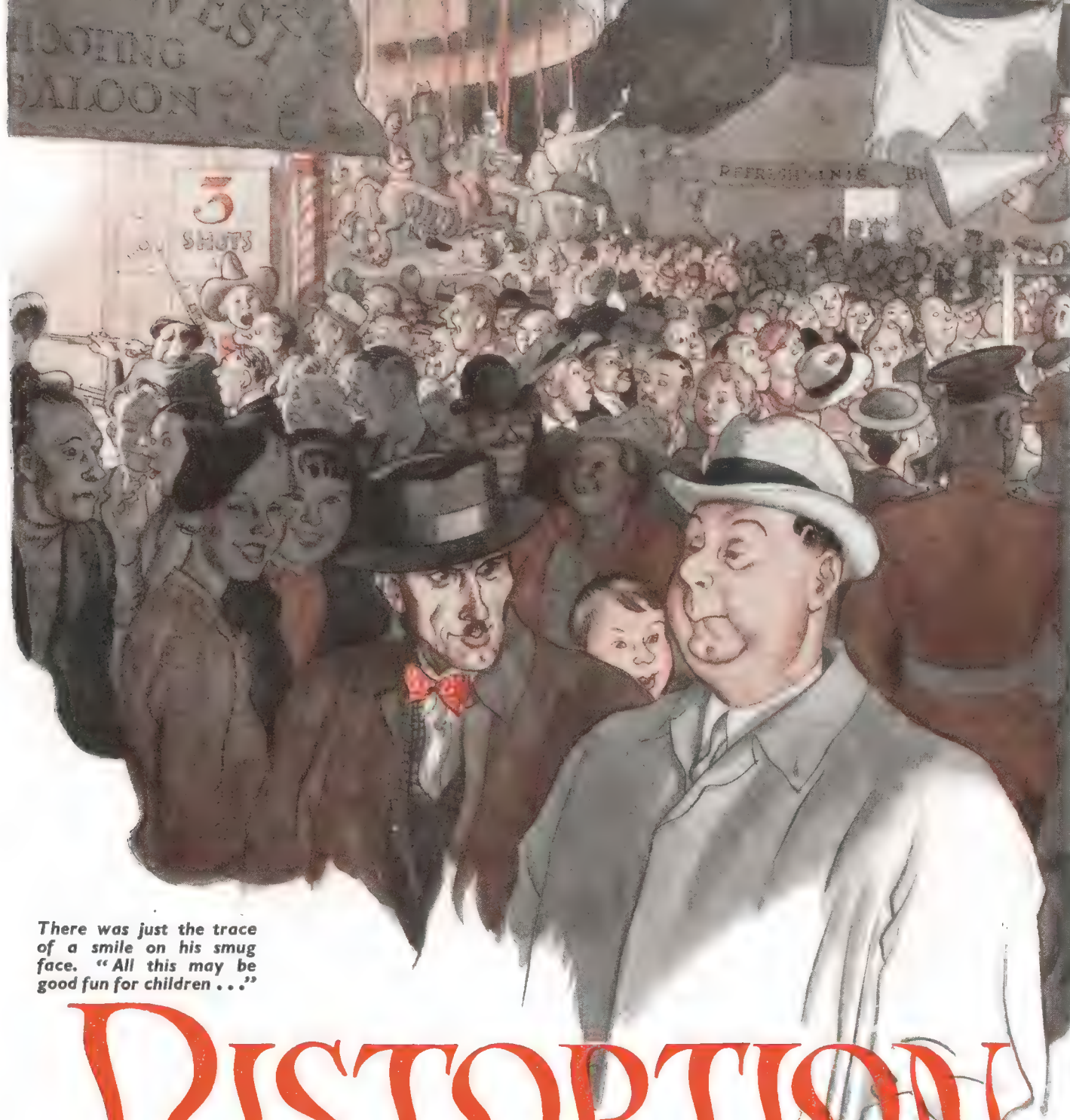
Mrs. Clingsland sat up in bed in a flutter of pity. "Oh, Cora, how dreadful! Why did you never tell me? You must get a better room for him at once. Has he a doctor? Has he a nurse? Quick, give me my cheque book!"

"Thank you, ma'am. But he don't need no nurse nor no doctor and he's in a room underground by now. All I wanted to ask you for," said I, though I knew I might have got a king's ransom from her, "is money enough to have a few masses said for his soul, because maybe there's no one else to do it."

I had hard work making her believe there was no end to the masses you could say for a hundred dollars; but somehow it's comforted me ever since that I took no more from her that day. And I saw to it that Father Divott said the masses and got a good bit of the money; so he was a sort of accomplice too, though he never knew it.







There was just the trace of a smile on his smug face. "All this may be good fun for children..."

# DISTORTION

by G. H. C. ASKEW

**M**Y mind keeps running on that question "when"—when had I first decided to murder John?

I looked up at him as he walked beside me; there was just a trace of a smile on his large smug face, a superior smirk which seemed to say, "All this may be good fun for children and coarse buffoons—the kind of spot Charles *would* enjoy"—a typical John-like expression.

For months I've borne with him, stood his airs and graces, his trite remarks and his assumption of knowledge of every subject under the sun.

And the damnable part of it is that he has got on, is becoming a personage.

With a blare of potted music a roundabout beside us swung into motion, its gaudy green dragons rising and falling on crimson poles.

We'd been at school together, and that, of course, is fatal, particularly when he harps on "the old place" and its traditions, which he keeps on stating, "In his own small way he is helping to carry on."

And then his inquiring look—that quick raising of the eyebrows whenever

I take a second double whisky. "I know what you're thinking, Mr. Sober John Sutton," I always feel like saying. "Yes, you're quite right, I am a bit shot away, and before the evening's finished I'll be drunk, blotto, old boy, quite blotto. Do you the world of good, too, you great lump of lard, to come off your perch for once and smell a gin cork."

But when had the idea first entered my head?—I'm blest if I know, kind of





grown on me, I suppose. For a long time I've felt the world would be a brighter place without dear John—but murder—one thinks twice about that—the risk of a noose around one's neck!

At times I feel my hate welling up from deep inside me, while I sit listening, almost fascinated, to his high-pitched voice blithering on and on of duty, righteousness, and the "will to work." He would have a voice like that; I'm for ever on edge now waiting for his pursed-up mouth to open and its little squeak to come forth.

And the silly wave he has in his hair! The sight of that alone is enough to drive a man mad, like a stage curate's. "Natural, Charles, natural," he says as he pats it.

I've got him here, Lord knows it was a tussle; must have looked damn funny my preaching to him, saying that he ought to investigate, see for himself in what vulgar childish ways the "hoi polloi" enjoy themselves. And what a spate of words I'll hear to-night while he sits drinking his cocoa—but of course he won't be drinking it—he'll be dead. And such a place for him to die. Funland—The People's Paradise! I only hope his ghost will be there to writhe in horror at his discovery.

I always like this place myself, even now I must take care not to catch that girl in yellow's eye, that would never do, not to-day—pretty little canary, though. How one's thoughts can wander.

Yes, perhaps it must have been a month ago when I finally made up my mind, when I realised I was sort of tied to John for life, one of that overgrown boy-scout's good deeds, he'll

***My racing brain enacts the scene. It should be over in less than thirty seconds. He'll hardly have time to know.***



never leave me alone now—never, never, never—he loves me—as a mother loves her erring son.

Now we're getting properly in the crowd, such a strong hot smell. "Do you really enjoy this kind of thing, Charles?" he says to me, looking round and sniffing.

Damn it, is the man blind that he can see no colour here, nor feel excited life throbbing around him, or get a thrill from the hoarse shouting of the barkers and the jangle of machinery mixed with strident music?

"Come on, John," I shout. "Forget yourself for once," and drag him by the arm deeper into the press before the Racer.

Here comes a car topping the highest peak and dives—a streak of silver, one second's glimpse of gold and dark hair flying wild, and it is lost in the blackness of a cavern, only the lingering echoes of screams remain, and then—crack, crack, crack—they too are lost as a thin seedy youth opens fire at coloured balls which dance on water-jets.

All round us people seek pleasure in the thrill of fear, adventuring with horrors in dark passages.

Suppose they knew! Suppose this fat woman crushed against me now could see into my mind and read John's murder there.

In my pocket I let my fingers play with the thin pliant wire and its smooth wooden handles, and feel delicious shivers of excitement rise. I grow hot and cold in turns, my whole body tingling with heat and the sweat breaking out and sopping my shirt, then freezing about me while little spasms of sickness shake my innards. Yet I've felt the same pacing backwards and forwards across a room waiting for the telephone to ring.

It's not time yet; I must not let myself be careless with impatience, there are surely limits to the pleasures of exciting fear, to wake from sleep one morning and know that death is waiting for you a few paces through the door. . . .

But my fingers itch to be at work, to be pulling taut the biting wire around that sleek white throat of his.

We walk on through a line of booths; large chequered dart-boards are there with folded ten-shilling notes asking to be pierced and won. Tables spread with shining trash as prizes for a true-thrown hoop.

I can sense John's disapproval and hear it in the hissing of his breath.

God, how I hate everything about him, the way he walks, the genteel way he blows his nose, his little deprecating cough, and above all, his patronising way.

To me he has become the embodiment of all I detest most in men. I see him now always as my mind has made him.

We are sitting together in a dodge-'em car, he is actually beside me bolt upright, taking his pleasures sadly, as we career in chase of a girl whose hair is the colour of standing corn. She looks over her shoulder, smiles, and turns her car across the path of mine. With a crash we meet and bounce apart, while a waft of strong scent and powder blows across my face. I breathe it deeply and

am filled with sudden desire. She is away again expecting me to follow. Hot blood courses through my body, my lips crying to press themselves against her firm white skin.

"How cheap these girls make themselves, Charles." His voice settles like an icicle upon my thoughts. I swing the wheel over and she is lost to me by others tearing past.

The current ceases and everything is suddenly silent, the sound of the roundabouts and scenic railways seems to come from miles away after the clanging racket of the cars.

I look at my watch. How slowly the hands move, it's early still and the crowds are too great. I must still have patience.

How I wish I hadn't got to wait, my throat is growing parched. I cannot concentrate and listen to the rot he talks. In my mind I keep on seeing that little recess in the "Haunted House" where the skeleton hangs; there's ample room, I know, I stepped behind yesterday to see.

John is growing interested in all about him; there's a fanatic's look of protest beginning to shine through his eyes. God! What a little puritanical soul he's got—can't see the rose for the dirt it's manured with—that's John all over.

Above the roar around us I hear the Robot laughing. "John, you must come and see this," I say. "It's the very essence of blatant vulgarity, it's superb."

I drag him half-protesting through the surging crowd. There it is—seated in its chair on a dais. One hand holds a great beer bottle, which it lifts and lowers. Its bloated red painted cheeks and vast metal thighs shake with each gust—Ha, Ha, Ha—Ha, Ha, Ha. Peal after peal blares forth on and on—Ha, Ha, Ha—Ha, Ha, Ha, terrible drunken machine-made laughter, which leaves one emptied of all conscious thought.

Around it its devotees and disciples stand gazing at their god with admiring eyes. A little woman, with a crimson-flowered hat pushed far back from off her hair, begins to titter; gently at first till rising on an ascending scale the note becomes hysterical—she is carried away. But the grinning vacant face laughs on unceasingly beneath its shining black top hat. Its loud guffaws pursue us as we walk.

In the distance I can just see the chimneys of the "Haunted House" and a little of its imitation red-brick walls.

## *There's a twist at the end of this story—and the loudest laugh that ever spoiled a murder*

I mustn't lead him directly up to it, we must wait a little yet.

My racing brain enacts the scene to come. It should be over in less than thirty seconds. I'll edge him into that recess to look at the skeleton—then slip the wire across his throat, cross the handles and pull—pull apart, he'll hardly have time to know and scream or gurgle; and if he should, who would notice that in a place like this when screams are coming from all sides? I'll just leave him there, another horror added to the rest—that's all he'll be; and in the half-dark nobody will be likely to discover or suspect the truth.

The only trouble—I must pick a time when we shall be alone or almost alone inside. A few ahead won't matter much; the danger'll be someone following close behind, but I can make sure of that by careful watching before we enter.

I feel my skin start to curl at every sentence he utters, pretentious nonsense! It really is extraordinary how he has got on, sheer smug efficiency, I suppose, nobody could possibly like him for himself, but maybe they see him differently. If he hadn't been able eternally to quote his own successes—to back his words of advice by pointing to himself—he might not have become such a canker in my mind, but to see him prosper month by month and year by year—Thank God, I shall soon be free, he has held me down by my hatred of him, but from tomorrow I shall start to soar.

While there were still hours to wait I wished that time would speed; but now it races on too quickly, soon I shall have no excuse for further lingering, but must lead him towards the painted canvas door, explaining as we go about that draught of air which blows the women's skirts about their heads. And he will lecture me on the pity of it all that such coarse devices should be tolerated—even in a place like this, I could almost quote the very words he'll use—but in he'll go to see it's really there.

The raucous crackling is becoming less as the crowds grow thinner, but still loud screams ring out at every second. Now I mustn't hesitate too long or else his cry might not be lost among the rest.

Beside me suddenly a drum beats out. I cannot control my involuntary start and try to cover it up, but it is no use—John has seen. "Really, you shouldn't let your nerves get into that state, Charles, too much—lifting the elbow—I believe is the expression," and



*As the reflection takes  
on a haughty look, I  
feel I can bear it no  
longer. I am almost  
doubled up laughing.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
L. G. ILLINGWORTH



he smiles his damnable smirk at knowing a colloquialism like that.

A loud voice follows the thudding drum, "Walk right in and see the most marvellous, the most unique collection of freaks ever brought together from the four corners of the globe. For the trifling sum of sixpence you will see—Miranda the Medusa-headed maid, brought here to you at vast expense from the immense sunless forests of darkest Africa—and Helen—the great queen of Troy's rival, gentlemen—twenty-five stone of blushing womanhood—I repeat it, twenty-five stone, gentlemen!"

Above the tall skirting boards I see the head and shoulders of the giant as he paces to and fro.

We are now right in the centre of this type of side-show. There is a pandemonium of shouting, each voice trying to outdo the others. Top-hatted managers of tattooed ladies, living statues, performing fleas, bellow into their gaudy-coloured megaphones.

A great desire enters me to leap upon the nearest box, drag John up there also and cry out to the passing crowds: "Here you are, here you are, ladies and gentlemen, the greatest show on earth—a murderer and his prospective victim—feast your eyes on the gentleman beside me for he is living now truly under the shadow of death! In fifteen minutes by the clock I shall consummate his execution in the 'Haunted House,' think as the seconds tick around your watches that the threads of his life are rapidly drawing to their close. No, Lady—he cannot hear what I am saying, he is both deaf and blind with his own self-importance, his own meddlesome unhealthy creed."

How they would come emptying out of all the adjacent booths as the rumour spread!

But perhaps it's really more amusing to be walking incognito like this, the greatest sensation of the day, perhaps of their lives, passing by while they fritter their sixpences away on lesser, duller shows.

Faintly above the hum of conversation I still hear the Robot laughing, ha, ha, ha.

"John," I say, "soon I'm going to take you and shatter your strong nerves within the portals of the 'Haunted House'—look there—that funny gabled building on our right. I shan't tell you all you'll see and feel or it may spoil it for you, but it's there that a wind blows up vertically . . ."

He's intrigued with the idea as I knew he would be. I can almost see his mind seeking for the right words to use in condemning its lewdness in the letters he intends to write to the papers.

The house has a slightly sinister look, I don't think I noticed that before, but its grimy windows seem to leer.

I'm quite calm now—excited, almost as if I was a trifle drunk—but calm. In a curious way I feel as if I were outside myself watching and waiting for the moment when my body must act.

My hand in my pocket grips the wooden handles, in a few more steps we'll be there.

I hope we shan't have to hang about. I'm all keyed up now. If only that Robot would stop laughing even for a moment. I keep half listening to it all the time, it distracts my attention and I'll need all that. Inside I surely won't be able to hear it.

"What goes on in there, Charles?"

Now what's John worrying about? "That"—I look where he's pointing. "That's the Hall of Mirrors—not very exciting."

"People seem to find it funny enough, by the sound," he says. "I think perhaps I'd better have a look inside—we have time, have we not?"

This would happen, now of all times.



## G. H. C. Askew

I don't want to wait, I don't want to wait.

"Yes, we've got time," I hear my voice saying. "But it's only distorting mirrors—nothing that will be of any real interest to you."

I want to pull him away, but I can't do that. I must just try to will him not to enter. "Don't go in there, John, don't go in there, John," I keep whispering to myself. But it's no use—his mind's made up—I shall be delayed five minutes—even ten, perhaps, it isn't fair to me.

Inside are groups of people laughing, the semi-circular wall before us is spaced

with and suffered under is gone. I am looking at a "Figure of Fun" that brings great gusts of laughter tearing their way upwards from my chest.

making us both appear ridiculous." Faintly I hear him speak.

"It's you, John, you." I'm still looking at his reflection as I answer, and as



it takes on a haughty look I feel I can bear it no longer, I am almost doubled up and gasping for breath.

"You don't mean to tell me you find this sort of vulgarity really amusing. I see nothing humorous in it whatsoever."

with tall broad mirrors.

We edge our way through the crowd and stand in front of a gleaming sheet of curved glass.

I look at myself crushed down and flattened out sideways with cheeks distended as if a long skewer had been forced within my mouth, the reflection bears no real resemblance, the distortion is too great. I turn to John's and stare at me is still John with all his vast smugness and self-satisfaction, his prishness, his intolerance plainly showing. But all the façade of dignity, of strength of character that I had invested him

I stand and laugh and laugh uncontrollably till tears start streaming from my eyes. As each paroxysm shows signs of ceasing, I look in the mirror afresh. How could I ever have taken such a caricature of a man seriously? Before me, glaring angrily, ridiculously, out of the glass stands all that there is to John, the rest was just distortion of my mind.

My ribs are aching with each successive peal. "John, John," I long to say, "I shall never see you as anything but this." Men and women are turning and looking, laughing among themselves.

"My dear Charles, what has come over you? Have you no control? You are

He leans forward to place a hand on my shoulder to lead me out, saying, "As soon as you've recovered your senses, we'll go on to this Haunted House you've spoken so much about."

But I lean back against the wall while another fit of laughter rocks me at the thought of murdering that! Of ever having dreamed to rid the world of such a gorgeous jest.

"Oh, John," I manage to stammer out. "You'll never understand—never—but you'll drink your cocoa to-night."

"Drink my cocoa! How absurd you've suddenly become, Charles. Of course I shall."



## The surprising behaviour seduced the

His mind was failing again. Suddenly it seemed to him that Jenny had promised to tell Andrew everything.

his native shrewdness and there is little of the £1,500 left. For the first time Jenny, restless after doing nothing for so long a time, takes the lead. Will Mortimer be the next victim? It is true that middle-aged men, especially those with determined chins, are a new proposition to her, but she never lacks courage—and indeed that chin is almost like a red rag to a bull.

### PART IV

ANDREW MORTIMER was very regular in his habits; even in his addiction to Mickey Mouse cartoons he was disciplined, and that was almost invariably indulged on a Tuesday. He had had three separate lives, each apparently unrelated to the other two. The first was his childhood when he was the youngest of a poverty-stricken family of four: his father had been a blacksmith by day, a poacher by night, and a tyrant at all times. The second life was the war which had severely killed off the rest of his family, by anxiety, influenza, bombs and poison gas: he himself had come through physically unscathed, beginning as the rawest of private soldiers and ending as a hard bitten major at the age of twenty-four. His third and final life which was still in progress was the building up of Andrew Mortimer Ltd., which had begun, bought with his war gratuity, as a tobacconist's in a back street, and was now the magnificent es-

### In previous instalments:

Mickey Mouse introduced Jenny Forsyth to Andrew Mortimer in a news-reel cinema. He is middle-aged, a rich business man, but one who has had to work hard for his position and who lacks a great deal of sympathy for human weaknesses. Life has treated him too hard for that. But Jenny's laugh expresses such childish and naïve amusement that it must, Mortimer thought, denote a very straightforward character. Nor is he entirely mistaken. For, although Jenny has a past which takes a great deal of explaining away, she has been brought up most carefully by her father—a solicitor who has been

struck off the rolls—to have no moral sense at all. That gives her a great advantage, and a certain innocence of malice propensity, in working the easy gold mine of "breach of promise." She has beauty, brains, and is a great actress. Already old men and young men have been glad to pay heavily to escape from their engagements to her. The last victim was the Hon. Billy Luckhurst, who discovered, all too late, that Jenny could, upon occasion, produce very affectionate and very common parents. Since he did not know they were extremely impermanent—having been hired for one afternoon—he is glad to get out of the entanglement by paying £1,500. After a long and quiet country holiday Forsyth feels that it is time to seek a more respectable way of life for them both. Unfortunately, when it is a matter of investments, he loves



*of the fly that  
spider*



tablishment in Upper Regent Street with twelve departments and a whole battalion of saleswomen.

Each of these unrelated episodes had had one thing in common, namely a hardening process. The strap wielded by the blacksmith had been succeeded by the scourge of duty in the war, and when that was over he was one of the few who didn't or couldn't relax. The sudden emptiness of peace reacted on him differently from the rest of the world. One glance at the jazzing posterity for which he had apparently been fighting made him realise that such pleasures meant nothing to him. So having neither a father nor a cause to lash him on, he made his own grindstone and kept his nose to it.

It was only lately that he had occasionally lifted his nose from it and looked round and wondered what he was getting out of it. Certainly it had been a lucrative grindstone. It had provided him with all the things he thought he wanted, power, independence, self-respect. And yet he had never been more dissatisfied in his life. During the hard years of the slump when existence had just been one anxiety after another, he had been comparatively happy. Now that it was easier sailing again, he felt thoroughly discontented. He had no interest to alleviate the monotony of making money, and instead of relaxing he had tightened his grip on the one thing he had. He knew that he had been making an unnecessary nuisance of

himself lately, interfering with his buyers, making new regulations, tightening control. It was a mistake. Things weren't working so smoothly. But he couldn't help himself. The real trouble, he knew, was that he had never paused and learned to enjoy himself. That was his failing. But how could one begin to do that at the age of forty-two?

Some men in his position would have told themselves that what they needed was the softening influence of a woman. Some men thought that a woman's influence was necessarily softening. Andrew didn't. He had been married once, one of those hectic marriages during the war. It lasted ten days, the period of his leave. The next time he had leave he discovered that the lady had been living with somebody else. She admitted it and thought that this was an adequate reason for her husband to allow her to divorce him. Andrew didn't agree with her. He did the divorcing, and the experience left him with grave doubts as to the advisability of marriage. There

# Rings *on her* Finger

by LAURENCE KIRK

ILLUSTRATION  
BY STEVEN SPURRIER



seemed to be something rather onesided about an institution which you could get into for thirty-four and sixpence and which cost five hundred and seventeen pounds to escape from.

After this he had avoided women until the year 1925, when he took unto himself a mistress. He found that she was utterly mercenary and soon left her. In the year 1928 he took to himself another mistress. She, at least, wasn't on the make; but she gave him the impression that she might have been an efficient nurse giving cod-liver oil to a difficult child. Andrew, in spite of his sourness, was of a passionate nature, and he didn't feel that this was how it ought to be. So he left her too. Since then he had lived a perfectly virtuous life and therefore was ripe for some further indiscretion.

He was of far too serious a nature himself to look at it quite like that. He was conscious of some of his shortcomings, and no longer imagined that any woman was likely to fall in love with him or that he was likely to fall in love with any woman. As he saw it now, his one hope of providing a little colour in his life was to have children. They at least would distract him from the seriousness of his own thoughts, they might even provide him with the affection he longed for. Thus what he was really contemplating was a marriage of convenience. The woman would have to be healthy, preferably about thirty-two years of age, of reasonably good appearance, refined and without temperament. In theory he saw no reason why this arrangement should not prove a success. On the other hand when he started looking about for women of good appearance, of the right age and without temperament, and thought of solemnly making them the mother of his children, the idea became strangely repellent.

Certainly it never occurred to him that Jenny would fill the bill. He hardly gave her another thought after he got out of the car, and had quite forgotten the incident two days later when he received a polite note from her, thanking him for his kindness in sending her home.

Throughout the long years in which he had been building up his business, Andrew had been continually beset by all sorts of people who were trying to get something out of him for nothing. One of the reasons of his unhappiness was that when he met with any kindness he couldn't help suspecting that there was some ulterior motive. That was one of the penalties paid for fighting one's way to success. This time, however, he was off his guard. He didn't realise that Jenny's note was bait. As a matter of fact she had worded it so carefully that it didn't seem to be bait at all. It seemed to say, "Now don't go and think that this is encouragement because it isn't. I am only writing because you really were very thoughtful and it would be churlish not to acknowledge it." Andrew read the letter over twice.

Well, she's got good manners anyway, he thought. And a most infectious laugh. Damn her for thinking I'm fifty all the same. . . . He got up suddenly from the large polished desk where he was sitting and went and looked at himself in the glass. It's all nonsense, he

went on peevishly, I don't look fifty. I'm not sure that I even look forty. He went back to his desk and read the letter over again. Yes, a nice girl, he thought. Good manners, and a delightful laugh. However, he ended wistfully, this correspondence must now cease.

He put the letter in the wastepaper basket and rang for his shorthand-typist. She noticed that he kept looking at her while he was dictating. Fortunately she did not understand why. For he had suddenly realised that Miss Pinkerton exactly filled the bill: healthy, thirty-two years of age, of good appearance, refined and without temperament. Refined and without temperament! God, yes, he thought to himself, how awful it would be, and suddenly in the middle of a letter he stopped dictating and sent her away.

It was touch and go all that week whether Jenny's bait produced a rise or not. Probably if it hadn't been a wet Sunday nothing would have happened, but the wet Sunday did it. The detective story which Andrew had been reading came to an end at half-past three, just when the rain was pouring its hardest, and he was left feeling lonely and bored, with nothing to do. He thought first of going to his club, but a club on a Sunday was not enlivening. He then thought of going to a cinema, but on a Sunday they didn't open till six. That brought him round to thinking of his weekly visit to the Miceys, and it occurred to him that he wouldn't enjoy it half so much without Jenny's infectious laugh beside him. That again brought him round to thinking that he looked fifty. But this time he found consolation in the thought. As long as she regarded him as an elderly man, there was no harm in it, there couldn't be any misunderstanding.

It only took him three minutes to write her a note, saying that if by any chance she proposed to visit the Tatler Theatre that week, it would be a great pleasure to him to call for her, preferably on Tuesday afternoon.

Jenny accepted the invitation. He had had misgivings beforehand that he had probably overrated both her beauty and the peculiar abandon of her laugh. But he found that he had not made any mistake about either. The outing was repeated the following week and again the week after that. A few evenings later he put on his tail coat and took her out to dinner and a theatre. Things were getting serious when Andrew could be induced to put on a tail coat, but he didn't notice it at the time. He put it on as though it were the most natural thing in the world, and thoroughly enjoyed the evening. The next week, at Jenny's suggestion, this time, instead of going on to a theatre they stayed at the restaurant and danced. The restaurant was not Giulio's.

All this time Andrew had been learning, or thought he had been learning, all that it was necessary to know about Jenny. Guessing that he despised the idle rich, she told him how she regretted not having been brought up to some profession. But her father wouldn't allow it. He was a scholar, rather vague and eccentric, and needed a good deal of looking after. She took Andrew up

and introduced him to Mr. Forsyth one evening when he took her home. He was exactly as Andrew had imagined him, rather distant, surrounded by books, and he offered him cigarettes out of an empty box. Andrew liked his distinguished appearance. Even more pleased was he at noting that he looked fifteen years older than he did himself. He came away feeling that he was quite young after all.

In spite of this he continued to treat Jenny as an uncle would treat his favourite niece. At least, he did until that evening when they danced together. He had been doubtful about the wisdom of this kind of entertainment. It was one thing to take her out to a theatre. To dance with her might invite comparisons with the younger men in the room. However, he needn't have worried. The younger men in the room nearly all belonged to the chinless brigade, and Jenny's professional skill made him believe that he was a much better dancer than he really was. What was really shattering was that the effect of holding her in his arms showed him once and for all that he was no uncle and she was no niece. He couldn't any longer pretend that he merely liked seeing her enjoy herself. He wanted her.

Having learned this, Andrew was not the man to fumble about it. He had to find out what Fate had in store. All the way home he spoke casually enough, but Jenny noticed that his chin was sticking out in that ominous way it had when a waiter brought the wrong change. She always felt just a little bit alarmed when his chin behaved like that, but she was entirely unprepared for what followed.

When they had both stepped out of the car and she had held out her hand to say good-night, he stood and glowered at her.

"No," he said, "it isn't like that."

Then regardless of the chauffeur and the policeman on the opposite pavement, he took her in a bearlike grip and kissed her on the mouth. Jenny first went limp and then went rigid. When he released her she didn't move for an instant, then she ran to the door as if she had seen a ghost.

Andrew watched her struggle with the lock, he watched her disappear inside, and hesitatingly he got back into the car and drove off. He didn't know what Jenny's behaviour signified, but he didn't believe it meant repulsion. And if it didn't! Incredible thing. He, of all people, to fall in love with a girl young enough to be his daughter. To think that he could make a success of it! That night he lay awake for hours tormented with fears and doubts, and it wasn't till five in the morning that he found resignation and went to sleep.

"Fool!" he thought. . . . "But," he added, "thank God I can still make a fool of myself; I was afraid I was beyond it."

John Forsyth hadn't changed his views about the rashness of this enterprise. He accepted it now with the philosophy of one who knows that he has made his bed and must lie on it. Sometimes while he was playing patience, he pondered deeply on the significance of it all. The





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Inscrutable Plan, that was as near as he could go to speaking of God, seemed to be working its will on him. It was strange how it always found the vulnerable place. Most of his life he had accepted the convenient theory that the wicked prosper, but lately he hadn't been so sure. It seemed to him that he was being gradually hemmed in by his own contrivances. He was beginning to suspect that Nemesis was not as dilatory as was imagined. It appeared probable that there would be no need to await a future life for any accounting, it looked as though he would get it good and hard in this. It was strange how one suddenly ceased to be a free agent and the past took control: odd, too, how private and confidential the accounting was. Each placid uneventful life had its own secret. Nobody escaped and nobody else knew.

Still, even if it was impossible to defeat the Inscrutable Plan, Forsyth still hoped that it could be considerably hampered by taking care; and he watched every step of Jenny's progress with a very critical eye. Her confidence reassured him and after he had actually met Andrew Mortimer, he began to feel that it would all work out smoothly and the Inscrutable Plan would have to try again. He couldn't help feeling a great pride in Jenny's diabolical cleverness.

The one thing that he couldn't see clearly at all was the way the final stage was to be manoeuvred. Having obtained the promise to marry and the necessary letters, how was Jenny to make Mortimer break it off? It had been simple enough in the other cases. But they had all been limp men. There was nothing limp about Andrew. Even when infatuated, he was no fool. It would take all Jenny's ingenuity to find a way out of this.

He was thinking of this very problem the night Jenny came home after Andrew had kissed her. On this occasion, instead of his eternal patience, he was doing a sixpenny jigsaw puzzle from Woolworth's. As usual, he barely looked up as Jenny came in.

She kissed him, lightly in her normal manner and he went on with his puzzle, triumphantly putting in a piece of sky.

"Any progress?" he asked casually.

Jenny made no reply, and after he had put in another piece of puzzle, he glanced at her. Then he sat up with a look of concern.

"Good heavens, my dear, what's the matter? Have you caught a chill?"

For a moment she stood shivering in front of him, then suddenly she fell down on her knees beside him and burst into tears.

"I can't go on with it, Budget," she cried. "I can't do it. I'm frightened."

Forsyth stared at her. He had never seen Jenny like this before, and he was alarmed.

"I think you've got a chill," he said. "Yes, your hands are icy. Come on over to the fire."

He helped her over to the fire, and she sat down, still sobbing, on the sofa. He rubbed her hands to warm them, and wondered whether he had replaced the last thermometer which Jenny had broken when he had influenza.

"Feeling better?" he asked after a minute or two.

She nodded.

"What's he done to frighten you all of a sudden like this?" he went on.

"Nothing," Jenny lied. "It's just . . . I don't like the way his chin sticks out. He's not like the others. You can't get past him."

"Well, that doesn't matter, Jenny dear. You remember I never thought he was suitable. I'm really rather complimented at being allowed to be right for once."

That seemed to soothe her a bit. She smiled wanly and went on in a more composed tone.

"I'm frightfully sorry to let you down, Budget, wasting all this time. You were quite right, but I couldn't see it. I suppose I was over-confident as you said. . . . But I can't go on. I just can't go on. He's different."

"All right, all right, now don't get excited again. As long as you haven't got a chill, nothing matters." Then he

## THE BUDDING ASH

by

JEAN EARLE

*So now at last the tree must yield,  
For afternoon comes;  
She drops her shadow on the field,  
And hangs her thumbs  
Of buds, jet-toed, like little feet of  
deer,  
And sleeps awhile.*

*There is no stir now,  
The spring sun shines hot,  
Only her shadow stretches on the  
grass  
As if let loose to graze,  
And a working spider hangs from  
her root  
His phantom whorl, invisible as air,  
Save for the swift green glitter, or  
gold spot  
As light shifts on the bough—  
But her skin feels him not.*

*Steadily on her sleep the sun thrills  
In its tidal flow,  
The tardy sap rises, and fills  
The thick heart-bough,  
The long arms, trailing into curled  
hands  
That hurt with buds—*

*She will have ease now,  
After this warm sleep,  
Shudder no more against the urgent  
wind*

*In agonised refusal;  
Stirring, she gathers her shadow in  
again,*

*Little by little, till the sky has  
stars;*

*She waits with the field sheep,  
knowing her time,  
And that the day to come will see  
her sweep*

*The air with delivered bough,  
And all her leaves aleap.*

looked at her sharply. "You haven't fallen in love with this man, have you?" Jenny laughed.

"He's old and horrible," she said harshly. "How could I like him?"

Forsyth was still looking at her as though she hadn't really given him an answer, and she suddenly stood up and went round behind him where he couldn't see her face.

"I'd like him to take me by the neck and throttle the life out of me," she said passionately to the fire. Then she turned to her father, "That isn't love, is it, Budget?"

Forsyth gave her a worn, weary, experienced look.

"It isn't what they say in the textbooks," he answered.

Forsyth stayed up with his jigsaw until a very late hour that night. He had made an abortive search for the thermometer after Jenny was safely in bed, but he didn't expect it to help him much even if he had found it: he no longer really believed that she had caught a chill, and the thermometer wasn't yet invented which would tell him how badly she had fallen in love. That she was in love he was quite convinced. This was the situation which he had long known he would have to face sooner or later, and he had always intended to deal with it ruthlessly. Love was one of nature's greatest frauds, and Jenny at all costs was to be saved from it: or, put in other words, he was jealous of his power over her and wasn't going to risk losing it.

That was how he had always thought about it, but now that the thing had happened, a host of new considerations came into view. Certainly he was conscious of a sharp pang of jealousy, but even that was of a different nature from what he had expected. He no longer minded losing his power; he knew, in fact, that the power in their relationship had already slipped from his hands into Jenny's: he merely felt desperately sad and lonely at parting from the last thing of value which he possessed.

What astonished him, as he fiddled with the jigsaw, was that he was not only willing but eager to make this sacrifice. The more he thought about it, the more convinced was he that this was the one way out, the one way of defeating the Inscrutable Plan. Unless Jenny fell in love and married, they were bound to go on and on down the slippery path to perdition. At this point he did pause and wonder what would happen to himself. Would he be reduced to living on the charity of his father-in-law? He made a grimace when he thought of it. No, even if he had been prepared to, Andrew Mortimer was hardly the type of man to encourage parasites. He would have to find something else. There were plenty of ingenious ways of playing hide and seek with the law, of obtaining the profits of a felony without actually committing it. He would go on as he had started. It surprised him to find that he actually relished the idea of continuing to live on his wits, provided that Jenny was safely out of it.

But even if Jenny did marry this man, how safe would she be? Wasn't the past there waiting to trip her up? Would Mortimer ever forgive her if he found out. London was the smallest place in the world when it contained somebody it would be fatal to meet. And there were so many people that Jenny must never meet again. Her victims, their lawyers, Giulio! Wasn't her only hope to take the enormous risk and tell the man the truth?

Forsyth had solved none of these questions when he went to bed that night, nor had he finished his jigsaw. He realised that he was doomed to be a helpless spectator of whatever drama there was to follow. He could merely hope. He couldn't possibly control.

The next morning Jenny was as calm and composed as usual, and offered him no information. He managed to restrain his questions until he was lighting his second cigarette after breakfast, which they always had together in his room.

"What are you going to do about this man?" he then asked in a matter of fact tone.



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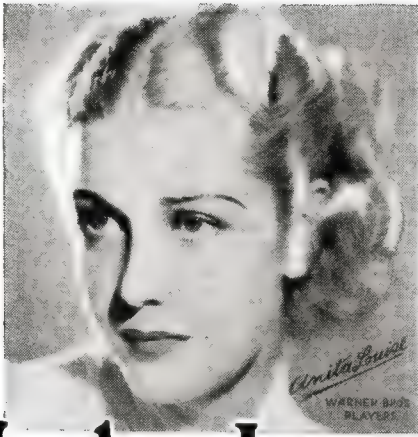


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# BORWICK'S

## BAKING POWDER

"I shan't see him again," Jenny said. "Isn't that a little sudden and drastic?"

"I don't think so."

Forsyth inhaled a large draught of his cigarette.

"You seem determined to die an old maid," he went on.

Jenny laughed.

"On the contrary, once I get going I think I shall marry quite often."

"Well, why not make a start with Mr. Mortimer? He's quite eligible."

"I've told you. I don't want to see him again."

Forsyth realised from her tone that he was intruding. Like most fathers in the circumstances he picked up *The Times* and pretended to read it.

Jenny went back to her own room soon after this, and shut the door. She was quite genuine in her determination at the moment never to see Andrew again. During the last year or two she had sometimes dreamed of meeting a male creature who would come up to her description of a man, someone quite different from these softies whom she had so cheerfully deprived of their money. This man in her thoughts generally assumed an appearance not unlike Ronald Colman. She had certainly never pictured him as a middle-aged business man. Nor had she imagined what a shattering experience it would be to be kissed by him. Although she had been as much kissed as any young women in London, hitherto she had escaped entirely unscathed. She had felt neither interest, remorse, nor pity for her victims. In spite of her dubious ideas of morality, she had certain very definite standards. She knew perfectly well that the Honourable Billy and the elderly George had merely wanted the use of her body. Apart from the appeal of her beauty they didn't appreciate her as a human being at all. Why shouldn't they pay a small fine for being so unpleasant? As for the precious Rupert, he had insulted her in the opposite manner, by regarding her as a bloodless thing upon a pedestal. Why shouldn't he pay a slightly larger fine for being so unnatural?

With Andrew Mortimer it was entirely different. Even in the early stages when he had been distant and avuncular, she had been aware of twinges of reluctance. She wasn't sure whether it was because he was just real and genuine, or whether it was because his chin made her a little afraid. If it hadn't been for his chin she would probably have let him go. But his chin was a challenge. It led her on to try to show him that she was stronger than he was. And now one kiss had taught her that she was very much weaker. The discovery made her both very angry and very alarmed. If one kiss could do that, what would happen to her if it became a habit? She enjoyed her power over man, she liked being free, remorseless, unhurt. It was shattering to discover that under all this there lurked an immense capacity for slavery.

All that morning her determination never to see him again grew and grew in intensity until she felt she must see him again just to tell him how determined she was. In the afternoon she began to wonder why he hadn't written or rung up; she continued to wonder this with alternative moods of hate and longing until late the following evening. Then a letter did arrive.

"DEAREST JENNY (It was Andrew's writing),

"I must know where I am, and I must know soon. I don't imagine that

you would enjoy telling a man that he is too old or too dull, so if you don't answer this letter, I shall understand. But I simply can't tell you what it will mean to me if you do answer it.

"With all my love,

"ANDREW."

Jenny gritted her teeth when she read it and tore it up. What a chance to be free of him, she thought. No words. No explanations. Just silence. Twice during the next forty-eight hours she took out a sheet of notepaper and picked up her pen, but each time she got up hurriedly and went out. By the third day she was quite convinced that it was all safely over. Then another letter arrived. It was even shorter than the first.

"JENNY,

"Why the devil don't you answer letters? There's a new programme at the Tatler. I'll call for you at three o'clock.

"ANDREW."

Jenny spent the morning murmuring to herself, "He'll call for me, will he? Well, I'll be out. I won't be treated like this." At a quarter to three, still murmuring, she began to put on her hat, a hat which she had chosen with particular care. "I won't go," she was saying, "Nothing will induce me to go." At three o'clock punctually the Rolls arrived and she went as meekly as a lamb.

"You've got a new hat, a very saucy little hat," he began as she sat down. "Where did you get it?"

Jenny told him.

"My buyers never get hold of anything like that," he went on; then in a different tone, "Well, why didn't you answer my letter?"

"I thought no answer was an answer," Jenny replied.

"You mean that?"

"If you want the truth, I'm not really quite sure yet."

"Why have you come out with me this afternoon?"

"I wanted to see what would happen next."

Andrew smiled. "Well, you must know that I'm going to propose to you."

"Yes."

"Couldn't you take it for granted, and let me know the answer?"

"Oh no, I couldn't do that."

"I've got to go right through with it, have I?"

"Yes... and don't do it in the middle of a Mickey Mouse; that would be fatal."

Andrew smiled again. "We're not going to Mickey Mouse," he said. "It's a lovely afternoon, probably the last lovely afternoon of the year. I'm going to take you for a walk in Kew Gardens. Have you ever been there before?"

"Yes," Jenny said. "I've been there."

She looked away out of the window and noted that it was a very lovely day, a still, coppery afternoon with a promise of frost. It would be nice to have a walk even in Kew Gardens. Not that his choice of locality embarrassed her in the least; she would have called it very woolly-minded to have thought of it like that. The occasion with Billy was merely business, this was life, and Kew was quite large enough to contain both of them. She merely wondered whether all men took their young ladies to Kew Gardens to propose.

He did not say much more on the way down except to ask after her father, and he said nothing at all for some time after they had got out of the car and gone through the iron gates into the Gardens. Jenny was hoping that he



wouldn't cough or clear his throat before he began. He didn't.

"I love you, Jenny," he started quietly. Jenny did not look up. It was late in November. All the leaves were on the ground and were being swept up by gardeners into bonfires. The sun was a yellow disc behind the bare trees.

"I could go on saying I love you," he continued. "But I'm not going to, at least, not now. As I'm asking you to marry me, I'd better tell you what I think marriage is. It seems to mean such different things to different people. To a good many it's just a temporary legalised affair. That isn't the way I think of it. Nor do I regard it as one giddy round of pleasure. Love is essential to it, passion is essential to it, but complete trust is far more essential than either of these. Even with all three it may be full of disappointments and sacrifices; it's an arduous task, it requires a hell of a lot of hard work to make it what it ought to be. All the same, I believe it's the one thing in the world worth having. I don't know that, of course. I merely believe it. I've tried everything else."

Jenny had been scuffling her feet through the fallen leaves as she listened. She looked up now to see if his chin was sticking out in its alarming stubborn way. It was.

"Another thing you've got to think of," he went on stolidly, "is whether you want children or not. I do. I don't mean that I just want children as children; I thought I did at one time, but I don't now. I want them because they'd be your children. I think they'd be sweet, your children. And I want them so much that I wouldn't marry you unless you wanted them too."

Still Jenny walked on, scuffling in the leaves, and said nothing. He went on. "Finally, there's myself. I really don't know what to tell you about that. You know how old I am. Even so, I think I'm still good for quite a bit yet. I bathe twice a day and don't leave cigarette ends in the soap dish. I don't snore. I may sleep with my mouth open, but I don't think so. On the other hand, I am what my experience has made me. I've taken a lot of hard knocks in my time, and given them. I have had to defend myself against all sorts of dangers and all sorts of people. I don't give money to beggars. At least . . . no, I'm sure I don't give money to beggars. I'm hard. But I don't want to be hard, Jenny. I want to learn to be more gentle, easier. I want some warmth in my life. I believe you could give it to me, if you would."

Jenny still walked dreamily on, and at last he turned to her and said in an exasperated tone,

"I don't believe you've been listening to a single word I've said."

"Oh, yes I have, Andrew, I promise."

"Well, stop scuffling. It gets on my nerves. Didn't your nurse ever tell you not to scuffle in leaves?"

"Often," Jenny answered smoothly. "But I like it. Try it yourself. It's very soothing."

Andrew gave her a look with his chin stuck out. Then he did scuffle for a few steps. He stopped when Jenny turned and laughed at him.

"By the way," he went on, "we'd have enough to live on."

"What would you call enough?" Jenny asked.

"I'd call four hundred a year enough for the right people," he answered. "Even two hundred. I'll have more than that as long as there isn't another slump."

"Good! Well, go on."

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"I don't think there is any more."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing except what I said at the beginning. I love you. I love you so much that I really rather dislike you for coming and upsetting my life like this. It was very calm and well ordered before, you know."

Jenny gave one last triumphant scuffle.

"It is exasperating, isn't it?" she murmured. Then she suddenly turned and faced him, looking up at him sincerely.

"Andrew, you don't expect me to give you an answer now?"

"Of course not, my dear, you can have as long as you like to think it over."

She paused a second.

"You've been sweet," she went on. "I hope I can say yes, but there are so many things to think of."

"I know. I wanted to tell you everything."

"You have told me everything. Now I want you to kiss me again."

He kissed her just as he had the other night. This time she was quite limp in his arms. While he was still holding her, she looked up and studied him.

"Are you the sort of man," she asked, "who would be capable of smacking me if I really deserved it?"

"Yes," Andrew said, "quite capable."

Jenny then released herself.

"That's the only other thing I wanted to know," she ended. "Let's go back to the car. It's getting cold."

Jenny went home that evening intending to tell her father all about Andrew. She had already confessed to herself that she was in love. That hadn't been easy. But it was going to be much more difficult to tell him, for she realised that it meant the end of the exclusive singlehearted association with him, which had hitherto been the theme of her whole life.

However, actually the confession had to be postponed. When she arrived at the flat she found her father sitting in front of the fire, shaking all over. He had always been liable to chills, and they always began with this form of violent ague. Sick of the palsy, Jenny lightly called it afterwards. But she was always terrified at the time. In her own mind she always killed him right off, either stone dead with pneumonia or lingeringly with tuberculosis. It really was most alarming to see his hands shaking and hear his teeth chattering. And he wasn't a helpful patient. First of all, he wouldn't go to bed, and then when he was in bed he wouldn't have a doctor. He wouldn't eat, and he insisted on drinking whisky. Jenny meanwhile rushed out and bought a new thermometer. When she brought it in, she was far too agitated to remember to shake it down, and she nearly passed out when she took it out of his mouth and saw what it indicated. After that she pulled herself together and did it properly. Forsyth suffered the repetition peevishly. When she looked at it this time she saw that his temperature was 98.4, exactly normal. Thermometers were alarming and humiliating things.

He became feverish later when the ague passed off, and Jenny got up every hour during the night to see how he was. She had given him her own hot bottle and couldn't have slept in her chilly bed even if she had wanted to. For this devotion she was twice told, "For God's sake, to go to bed and not to fuss." But the next few times she visited him, he was sleeping peacefully. In the morning he was better, and Jenny decided it wouldn't be sudden, it would be a lingering death by tuberculosis. In

the evening he was better still, and she merely felt rather cross with him for giving her such a fright.

The next trouble, she knew, would be that he would want to get up and do something asinine, so she stayed at hand to prevent it.

While she was sitting by his bed that evening, he put out his hand over hers.

"You'd be quite a good nurse, my dear," he said, "if only you were less earnest and less terribly hard on thermometers."

"You'd be a loathsome patient," she retorted, "whatever you were."

He smiled to himself, then after a pause, he went on:

"Jenny, dear."

"Yes, Budget?"

"Has it occurred to you, my dear, that as a teller of untruths you are becoming careless?"

Jenny looked up sharply.

"D'you mean . . . ?"

"I mean that a few days ago you told me you were never going to see Andrew Mortimer again."

"I know, Budget, but . . ."

"And yet only yesterday afternoon, I distinctly saw you getting into his car outside this very house. You were wearing a new hat, too, a hat which I should describe as a rather special hat."

Jenny's eyes opened wide as they always did when she was going to cry. Her mouth opened too, but she couldn't reach any words to explain what had happened to her.

"And where did you go in the car?" Forsyth asked gently.

"Kew Gardens," Jenny whispered.

"Kew Gardens!" Her father made a grimace. "I must say I call that just a little tactless."

Jenny then did break into tears, convulsively. She flung herself passionately on to the bed.

"But I couldn't help it, Budget. I didn't want it to happen. I never wanted there to be anyone but you. It's always been perfect with you. We've had such fun together. I hate this man for coming butting in like this."

Forsyth gently fingered her hair.

"You hate him—but you want to marry him all the same."

Jenny looked up searchingly at him. "Would you mind frightfully, Budget? After all, it needn't really make any difference to us, need it?"

Forsyth went on fingering her hair.

"That's the first time," he continued in the same soft tone, "that I've ever known you to be guilty of sloppy thinking. I'm really ashamed of you after all the trouble I've taken. Of course it will make a difference, Jenny, it will make all the difference. As for my minding, if you want to know, I do mind—frightfully. I expect after your afternoon in Kew Gardens you are tired of being told that you are loved. But I love you, too. You are the only thing I have ever loved. And I never meant to love you, either, any more than you meant to love this man. It just hits you suddenly out of the blue . . . and then you say it needn't make any difference. For God's sake, girl, talk sense!"

"I shan't marry him, Budget," Jenny cried. "I can't marry him if it's going to alter us."

Forsyth gave her a little slap on the ear.

"More sloppy thinking!" he said. "It doesn't matter now if you marry him or not. The fact that you've wanted to marry him means that our relationship is over. And that's the way it ought to end. Things live if they end at the right time, they only die when they fade and wither and dwindle away. Half the



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misery in human life is caused by trying to make things which are essentially temporary last beyond their time. . . . And now," he went on more briskly, "if you'll hand me the whisky and the soda, I'll answer the one important question which you haven't asked me. Do I think he's the right type of man for you? Yes, I do. You need someone, my dear, who will be able to put the fear of God into you. I have tried my best and failed. I shall now quite cheerfully hand you over to someone else and watch how he gets on."

Jenny sat up and dried her tears. "I suppose you're a lovable beast," she sniffed, "but you certainly are a beast."

"Why, have I said anything that's untrue?"

"No, idiot, it's because it's all disgustingly true that you're a beast."

"Ah, I'm glad to see that the sloppy thinking was only temporary."

"But what will you do, Budget, that's what I want to know. That fifteen hundred won't last for ever."

Forsyth poured himself out a drink. "Your elderly father," he said complacently, "has a quiet little scheme of his own."

"Budget, you must tell me what it is."

"I shall not. You have retired from the business. I am now the senior and only partner. I can do as I like. It's very beautiful to be able to do as you like."

"But, darling . . ."

"Your job now is to study books on mothercraft. You'd better start on them quite soon. There's a lot to learn. Incidentally, there's quite a good one I brought you up on. You had the most filthy habits, my dear, and it tells you how to deal with them. I really must try and find it for you."

He gave her a slap on the other ear and lay back on the pillows smiling. Jenny sat looking at him for some moments with her head on one side; it was the sort of look a dog gives its master when he has withheld an expected smacking. She waited a moment to see if he had any more to say, then she jumped up impulsively and gave him a hug. Forsyth pressed her cheek to his harshly for a moment, then he pushed her away.

"There's just one other thing I want to ask," he went on coolly. "Do you intend to say anything to Andrew about Master Billy and the others?"

"Good heavens, no," Jenny looked quite aghast.

"Ah, you don't! That's the way you feel about it. I wondered."

Jenny stared at him for a moment.

"Why on earth should I tell him?" she went on vigorously. "It's nothing to do with him, all that is quite different. I'm not the least ashamed of what we've done. I think it's awful when people who fall in love get all jealous and prickly about things that happened years before they ever even met. I bet Andrew's got some sticky episodes in his past. I don't want to hear about them. At least, I do, really. I'd love to hear. But I do understand that they are absolutely nothing to do with me."

"Yes, yes, and yes," Forsyth responded quietly. "I am entirely in agreement with you, my dear. I am not ashamed of what we've done, either. In fact, I consider that we have been doing a public service in arranging a redistribution of the nation's wealth. In our time we have put a lot of money into circulation which would otherwise have remained idle. I would have been quite ready to go on with it, although as a matter of fact, it isn't a thing we could have gone on repeating indefinitely."

Actually, you've chosen a very good time to step out of it."

"That isn't why I want to marry Andrew," Jenny protested hotly.

"Of course it isn't, of course it isn't. I know that. It does happen to be very appropriate all the same. However, what I was trying to say was this. Our past transactions were, I think, quite legal; I believe they were even legitimate, at any rate, as legitimate, let us say, as a large number of dealings which take place in respectable city offices. On the other hand, as somebody once remarked, 'there's nothing good nor bad but thinking makes it so.'"

"Shakespeare," said Jenny helpfully.

"Exactly, my dear. For once you are absolutely right. You generally attribute anything that's been said that's worth saying to Shakespeare, quite regardless of who really said it. However, the point is this. These ventures of ours according to our thinking are good. I'm afraid that according to Andrew's thinking they may seem very bad indeed."

"I know," Jenny said. "And that's just why I'm not going to tell him."

"I see. I was rather afraid it might be like that."

Forsyth lay back on his pillows looking thoughtful and serious. Jenny looked at him in a puzzled manner.

"I think you're doing the sloppy thinking now," she said firmly. "That is, if you really are trying to persuade me to tell him. Why tell somebody about a thing which you know is all right, and which you know he'll think is all wrong? It's idiotic, asking for trouble. I don't think you can be very well if you really feel like that, Budget."

Forsyth smiled rather wearily to himself.

"I am a great disciple of expediency," he said. "In this case I think it would be expedient to tell him and to tell him expediently. I mean, you would say you were put up to it by your wicked old father and didn't know what you were doing."

"I'm damned if I will," Jenny hotly replied. "I knew exactly what I was doing. Besides, I had all the fun; you merely did the tedious part."

Forsyth sighed. "I believe I have often told you," he went on, "that a misplaced truthfulness is the deadliest of the seven sins. What you've really got to decide," he proceeded, after a pause, "is whether Andrew is ever going to find this out or not. That's what you've got to decide, and I'm glad it's you and not me who has to do it. If you come to the conclusion that he won't ever find out, well and good, keep silent. If you come to the conclusion that he will find out, then taking his character into consideration, I think he ought to learn it from you and not somebody else, and I think he ought to learn it now and not later. There, the Oracle has spoken! The Oracle will be right whatever you do, and you will probably be wrong whatever you do. That is the amiable way that Oracles have. Now you may leave me. I'm tired. You talk too much."

Jenny smoothed his pillows and tidied his bed and left him. She thought over what he had said several times during the rest of the evening, but she never went very deeply into it. It still seemed to her that it would be far too difficult and dangerous to tell Andrew anything, at any rate at the moment. Perhaps it might be possible to do it later when she was more sure of him. To her, although she was definitely afraid of telling him, it was quite a minor matter, a mere little nuisance. She had no conception at all of the absolute enormity that Andrew

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would have deemed it, if he had known.

Actually she spent most of the evening, not thinking of this practical detail, but dreaming of the vast prodigious things that were happening to her. There was sadness in her thoughts, sadness for the ending of the unique relationship with her father, a sadness at saying good-bye to the cheerful ruthless adventurer which had been herself. Here was another reason why she couldn't think very seriously of the problem of telling Andrew. All that past already seemed so incredibly remote. She couldn't feel it had anything to do with this new tingling vibrant woman that had been born in her. She knew that Andrew was the one man for her. In her heart she had already devoted her life to him, vowing to amuse, to bewilder, to mystify and to cherish.

Her father had fallen asleep with the light on when she went in to say good night to him. She kissed the pillow by his ear so as not to wake him, then she turned out the light and tiptoed out of the room. She felt like crying again when she thought of him, but she knew what his opinion was of sloppiness and refrained. A deep calm sleep came over her as soon as she was in bed.

The next morning when she went in to see Forsyth, his appearance frightened her. His face was a horrid grey colour, and his breath came in short shallow gasps.

"Budget, Budget!" she bent over him. "What's the matter?"

"I don't think I'm quite so well," he answered wearily. "Fetch a doctor."

For a second Jenny looked helplessly round, then she ran to the other room to the telephone. Fetch a doctor! It all seemed easy and simple enough, but they didn't have a doctor. All the time they had been living in London, they had never gone farther than threatening each other to call in a doctor. And now a doctor was needed desperately, and it mattered so terribly that it was the right one. What did one do? Find a name in the telephone book? Ask the neighbours? With a feeling of thankfulness she suddenly remembered Andrew. He would know a doctor. He was someone to lean on when something awful happened like this.

Her fingers seemed to be all thumbs as she dialled the number of his private house. But at last she was through.

"Hullo, hullo!"

"Yes, who is it? Mortimer speaking."

"Oh, Andrew, it's Jenny," she cried.

He could hear how hollow her voice was.

"My dear, what's the matter?"

"Father's ill," Jenny stammered. "I think he's very ill. I want a doctor, Andrew. I don't know who to get."

"I'll send my doctor at once. You can't have anyone better."

"Oh, thank you, thank you."

"And don't be frightened, dearest, it will be all right."

Jenny wanted to hear more of his strong reassuring voice, but the receiver clicked at the other end and there was silence. She went back to the other room and told her father the doctor would be there immediately. "My chest hurts," he said gaspingly.

Jenny stood for a moment looking at

the colour of his face; it was grey, as grey as the ashes when the fire has gone cold. With a shiver she turned and started to do some tidying of the room. There was nothing that she could do that was of any use, but it was vital to keep her hands employed. No longer was she killing him off in her mind. It was all too near. She dared not think of it at all.

It seemed ages and ages before the doctor came. By that time Jenny was sitting rigidly on a chair, holding her hands tightly clasped together on her lap. The doctor was a young clean-shaven confident man. He gently pushed Jenny away as she vaguely tried to follow him into her father's room. The door shut in her face.

After a surprisingly short time he came out again.

"When was Mr. Forsyth taken ill?" he asked quietly.

"He got a chill the night before last," Jenny said dully. "He seemed much better yesterday, almost quite well. It isn't pneumonia, is it, doctor?"

The doctor looked round the room.

"Can I use the telephone?" he asked.

"Yes, there it is."

He dialled a number and looked up at the receiver to his ear.

"Pneumonia isn't such an alarming thing as some people imagine," he said gently. "On the other hand, there's a slight complication. He'll need expert nursing." Then he turned to the mouthpiece: "Hullo! Harley Nursing Association? Doctor Windsor here. Is Nurse Marshall free? Good. I want her at once at 25 Sandgate Mansions. Acute pleural pneumonia. And who have you got for night duty? Yes, she'll do. And see that Nurse Marshall gets here at once. It's urgent."

He put the receiver down and looked up at Jenny's white anxious face.

"Have you got any brandy in the house?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Please go and fetch it."

Jenny obediently brought the bottle and the glass. He poured out a stiff dose.

"Now drink that," he told her.

Jenny drank it.

"I'm afraid you'll find yourself rather out of it during the next few days," he said gently; "the nurses will have to take charge, and the very most you can do is to see that they have everything they want—and not to make yourself ill by worrying. Your father is ill, there's no question of that. In a few days' time he will be very ill. I promise you we'll do our damndest to save him. I think there's a very good chance . . . now you had better go and lie down until the nurse arrives. I must go and look at Mr. Forsyth again."

Jenny found that it was exactly as the doctor had predicted. As soon as the nurse arrived, she became a person of no importance, a mere forlorn ghost flitting about asking for employment and finding none. The world had become a nightmarish kind of world, with people in the next room talking in low tones, softly closing doors, and sometimes hurrying. Very soon she became aware, partly from intuition, partly from scraps overheard, of something terrible

impending that was called the crisis. She heard the word whispered by the night nurse to the day nurse and repeated by the doctor. It seemed always to be getting nearer and never to arrive.

The doctor rang up Andrew as soon as he had left and gave him a much more complete and alarming account than he had given Jenny. Andrew immediately went round to see her, and she cried quite silently on his waistcoat for several minutes. In the afternoon he came back again and insisted, much against her will, in taking her out for a drive. The next day he did the same, and again the day after. On the fourth day he sat with Jenny in her sitting-room, for the crisis had at last arrived. When it was over, he went in with her and sat by her father's bed.

All this time, in addition to the crushing pain in his chest and the struggling for breath, Forsyth had been tormented by the feeling that there was something terribly important that he hadn't done. He tortured his flaming mind to discover what this was; for a moment he would grasp it and then it would elude him. In his few lucid intervals he would know exactly what it was he had to do. He must make Jenny promise to tell Andrew the truth. It was absolutely vital, the one hope of avoiding disaster. When he thought of this and realised how important it was, he would moan something to the nurse, thinking he was telling her to fetch Jenny. She came forward and smoothed his pillows and later when Jenny did appear the thread had slipped from his fingers again.

He was delirious throughout the crisis. He imagined all the time he was in Germany being rough-handled by a gang of Storm Troopers. They left him bleeding in the gutter, and he knew he would die. A long time after, he opened his eyes and saw that he was in his own bed in his own room. He could still see, although he could neither speak nor move. It was better to be in one's own room than a German gutter. What swines the Nazis were to have left him like that! Then his mind became a little clearer. How odd his room looked! Exactly the same in every respect, but he seemed to be divided from it by some new dimension which was both distance and height and depth.

His mind became clearer still and he thought longingly of Jenny. What was to happen to her? What had he done? Dimly out of his memory swam the agonised words of that same Indian Prince who had cursed his tutor—he had loved someone, too—"Whatever good or evil I have done, it was for you, it was for you. . . ." His mind was failing again, the strange new dimension separating him still farther from all reality. But he did see Jenny and Andrew sitting by his bed, and her hand was held in his. Suddenly it seemed to him that he must have spoken to her after all. She must have promised. She must have told Andrew. She had told him and it was all right. . . . He smiled then or thought he smiled, and with his last few conscious breaths, his old cynical self came to the fore once more. Odd if there is another side after all, he thought. . . . Wonder what kind of a reception I'll get.

*In next month's instalment—Jenny, alone in the world, finds herself facing a problem: Shall she reveal her past in order to ensure her happiness in the future?*



# Nash's

## *Features for March*



### **THE WORLD WANTS PEACE BUT IS IT POSSIBLE ?**

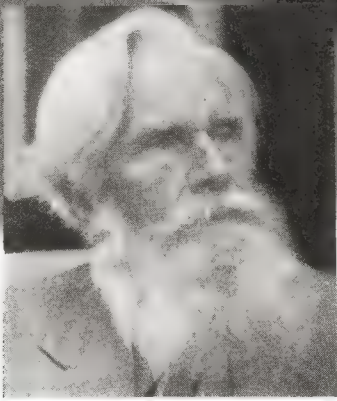
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**JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES**

*The noted English Economist*

**W**ORLD peace requires two conditions. Those nations which have a real and abiding will to peace must combine to preserve it; their joint action must be sufficiently imposing to make the risk of war too great to be undertaken except by a gambler or a madman. The League of Nations as constituted heretofore has been based on the false assumption that all nations alike are equally desirous of peace and justice. It has aimed therefore at including all nations and not those only which are genuinely peace-loving.

Until recently all nations at least pretended to ensue peace. But there are certain nations to-day which openly and avowedly ensue war. This is causing a gradual evolution of the League by which it may come to embrace only the genuine peace-lovers. This line of development is to be welcomed and will be a source of increased strength, not of weakness.

It is useless to discuss disarmament to-day. On the contrary the League of Nations must possess greater military and economic strength, and if possible much greater strength than the law-breakers. But alas, this is a dream! For a new league of peace-loving nations will be powerless if it does not include the United States.

Yet we are told that this is an impossibility; that the United States is too fearful of outside entanglements, too aloof from the fate of the rest of the world and even of civilisation itself to make the needful commitment.

*Photos: Bassano,  
Coster, Topical,  
Wide World*







# *it Possible?*

## **ANDRÉ MAUROIS**

*The famous French Biographer*

**N**OTHING is permanent or perfect in human affairs. Law courts, prisons, penalties have never suppressed crimes completely, but they have made them less frequent and thus allowed men to live in relative security. Modern warfare, with the dreadful arms it employs, will become such a terrifying danger that men should seek all possible means to enforce international law if they do not wish the human species to perish.

The League of Nations might have become the instrument of such justice had it received the unreserved support of all civilised nations. But this institution has never had any chance. The United States, by refusing to join it, deprived it of one of the great forces of the World. England, after having for fifteen years weakened it, now rallies round it with energy at a moment when it is difficult for France to show the same enthusiasm.

We recognise after experience that the covenant was badly drawn up, and

that it lacks precision. Where is the remedy? It would be necessary to reform the League of Nations in such a manner that the United States could agree to join it, or if this solution is impossible, to create a European federation.

But I fear, alas, that men still need terrible lessons before attaining that wisdom which would impose on nations the discipline that every court of justice imposes on individuals!

## **Mrs. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT**

*The Wife of the President of the United States*

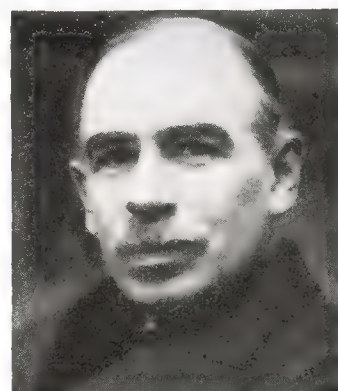
**P**ERMANENT World Peace is a possibility; a probability only if the world as a whole determines that self-preservation demands organisation for peace instead of war.

We cannot expect to make any treaties which will not need change. We must find a basis on which representatives of the people may meet and calmly consider changes occurring throughout the world, and the needs arising therefrom.

It is obvious that populations will change and economic conditions vary.



**LIN YU T'ANG**



**JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES**



**MRS. ROOSEVELT**



**THE REVEREND DOCTOR  
W. R. INGE**

*Must men always wage war to prove the righteousness of their cause? Here are the opinions of those who are helping to mould world thought*





## Peace—is it Possible?

If we realise that the ultimate good of all is more advantageous than the temporary good that may accrue to one nation or to one individual, we will be able to meet questions that arise and adjust them in a sane and reasonable manner.

### THE REVEREND DOCTOR W. R. INGE

*Former Dean of St. Paul's*

**W**E should have been spared much disappointment since 1918 if we had remembered Herbert Spencer's wise words: "There is no political alchemy by which you can produce golden conduct out of leaden instincts." Men and nations are saved by goodwill, not by political machinery.

The arguments of Sir Norman Angell and others against war are unanswerable. War between civilised nations is a crime and a blunder. The Great War was a civil war between nations which shared the same culture, and had no irreconcilable differences of interests. It was an immeasurable calamity to all concerned. A repetition of the experiment might plunge Europe into another

dark age, like that which interrupted the progress of civilisation between A.D. 500 and 1100.

The causes of this disease—we can call it nothing else—are, I think:

1. Ingrained pugnacity. Man has been a predatory carnivore for several thousand years, and it is not easy to let the ape and tiger die.

2. Fear; and the fear is too often well founded.

3. Survival of the old desire for territorial aggrandisement.

Hopeful signs are:

1. Better knowledge of other countries. No Englishman who has visited France or Germany or Italy or America can hate, or wish to injure, the inhabitants of those countries, and we hope that our visitors do not find us altogether odious.

2. Wars have usually been made by those who have something to lose. But if there is another war, all who have anything to lose will certainly lose it. War loans will be repudiated, and the civilian population will suffer unspeakable horrors.

3. Wars between nations are an obvious anachronism. I wish I were sure they

will not be followed by civil wars between classes.

Of course, Christianity would provide a cure; but we have known about Christianity for nearly two thousand years, and have never tried it yet.

### UGO D'ANNUNZIO

*President of the Italian League in America*

**W**ORLD peace will be possible when an enlightened humanity, in a supreme effort and aspiration for widespread goodwill and social welfare, will have realised that so far we have tackled the task of smothering the outbreak of armed conflicts among nations from the wrong end.

Our pacifist policies to-day aim chiefly at controlling military forces, in the belief that a people strong in arms will

*Photos: Central  
Press, Keystone,  
Wide World*



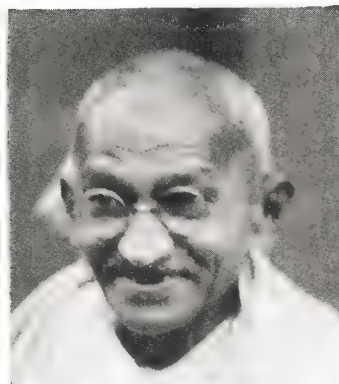




**SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA**



**ERNEST DIMNET**



**MAHATMA GANDHI**



**OSWALD SPENGLER**

sooner or later use them against its neighbour. Furthermore, international political relations have so far been based on the principle of strengthening the position of one group of nations which has no urge to wage war, in order to hold in check the power of others that feel the necessity of obtaining by force what they cannot obtain by peace. In other words, it is taken for granted that there are nations that *feel the tragic necessity of breaking peace*, while nothing has been done to do away with that *need*.

Military warfare has received universal moral disapproval, while economic war-

fare—which history has taught to be the fundamental cause of international violence—is the avowed coalising and dismembering force which establishes alliances and creates dissensions. If economic peace were the aim of theoretical pacifists as well as of militant politicians, it would not be necessary to agree that such and such a nation may have so many tons of naval units and just so many submarines, any more than in a prosperous community of peace-abiding citizens you'd stipulate an agreement with your neighbour as to how many pistols each may have.

### **HAVELOCK ELLIS**

*Sociologist, Philosopher and Psychologist*

**I** HAVE no doubt whatever that a permanent world peace is possible and will be achieved when the will to it exists. There is no war among the animals nearest to man and no evidence of its existence in early man's history. It is a phase of human development which may once have been beneficial in aiding social discipline and co-operation, but to-day, in the opinion of the majority of people, it has become useless and mischievous. Even when successful, it fails to achieve the security for which it is chiefly waged.

The united efforts of the world's lead-

ing nations, whether or not acting through the present League, can alone insure the replacement of war by arbitration. It is our business by educational methods to make clear the effects of war on civilisation, and our policy as citizens of a democracy to exert influence on our governments for its abolition.

### **ERNEST DIMNET**

*The author of "The Art of Thinking"*

**I** S it reasonable at the present day, the present troubled day, to speak once more of the possibility of permanent peace? Yes, it is. Only emotional natures, people in whom the intellect does not predominate, take advantage of the political debacle to-day to want the inferior kind of self-expression known as pessimism. Their arguments—namely, the impossibility of making men angels, the difficulty of adjusting territory to population, the jealousies and greeds which cannot be killed, the irrepressibility of dictatorships, and the pliancy of democracies—have been adduced *ad nauseam*, and will always be.

Let them! For it is also a fact that, some fifteen years ago, nearly the whole world actually believed in the possibility of peace, that millions of men and women—the flower of mankind—still believe in it, and every student of the history of ideas knows that such universal certainty always materialises in the end. What is necessary is to multiply the number of such believers, as the numbers of people believing in science, or in a spiritual God, has gradually been multiplied.

The world has never before felt so much the uselessness of war. What it lacks is the wisdom, the restraint, the sense of values, which should accompany that conviction. Why should it not learn these things?

Why should not real Christianity be preached? And if it is, why should it not succeed in this, as it has in undertakings of no less difficulty?

### **OSWALD SPENGLER**

*The famous German Philosopher*

**T** HE question whether world peace will ever be possible can only be answered by one familiar with world history. To be familiar with history means, however, to 'know men



## Peace—is it Possible?

as they have been and always will be. It makes a great deal of difference, though most people will never understand this, whether one thinks of the history of the future as it actually will be, or as one wishes it to be.

Peace is a wish; war a fact. And human history has never fulfilled human wishes and ideals. Among both beasts and men, life is a battle—among men a battle between individuals, classes of society, peoples and states, depending on whether it spends itself in commercial, social, political or military forms. It is a battle for might, profit or justice, and if other means fail, then men will always turn, as a last resort, to the use of force.

It is an ominous fact that to-day only the white peoples are talking about world peace—not the far-more-numerous coloured peoples. So long as the individual thinkers and idealists alone do it—they have done it in every age—it hasn't any effect. But when whole peoples become pacifistic, it is a symptom of decadence. Strong and unsophisticated races are not so inclined. It is an act of resignation to the future, for the pacifistic ideal means a final state of affairs which is contradictory to the very meaning of life.

So long as there is human development, there will be wars. Pacifism means to resign the control of the world to those who are not pacifist, and among those there will be white men who will find a following as soon as they meet with success.

If there were to take place in Asia to-day a great uprising against the white race, countless white people would join in it, because they are tired of the peaceful life. Pacifism will remain an ideal, war a fact, and if the white peoples are determined to lead no more, the coloured races will, and they will become the rulers of the world.

### SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA

*Spanish Delegate to the League of Nations*

**P**ERMANENT world peace is no more impossible, no more possible either, than permanent national peace, if by permanent peace is meant long historical stretches during which violence does not play in human relations a part worth recording.

The most important nations of the world have enjoyed permanent peace for a fairly long period—America, for instance, practically since the days of Lincoln. There is no insurmountable obstacle in the way of an international

evolution towards a similar state governing relations between the several nations of the world.

The terms to pay for world peace are implied in the definition of the problem as stated above.

Peace is concordance, between separate wills. The sixty-odd separate national wills must concur for this. It is not sufficient that they all accept an international law of ethics, even though this would be a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Concurrence of wills requires more than concurrence in the ways of behaviour. It presupposes concurrence in aims. At present every nation serves its own national aims as supreme.

No peace will be possible unless such claims to finality are given up by all the nations in favour of the only aim worth their concurrence—the reasonable organisation of the world as the home of mankind, which in its turn cannot be accepted as such unless the world is felt by all men as one fatherland.

National patriotism has brought about national peace. Only world patriotism can bring about world peace. But world patriotism cannot be attained by whitening down national patriotism.

The way is through elevation and purification of the love of our national fatherland.

The world is the fatherland of fatherlands. When this is understood there will be permanent world peace.

### MAHATMA GANDHI

*The foremost Indian Leader*

**N**OT to believe in the possibility of permanent peace is to disbelieve in the godliness of human nature. Methods hitherto adopted have failed because rock-bottom sincerity on the part of those who have striven has been lacking. Not that they have realised this lack. Peace is unattainable by part performance of conditions, just as a chemical combination is impossible without complete fulfilment of conditions of its attainment.

If recognised leaders of mankind who have control over engines of destruction were wholly to renounce their use, with full knowledge of implications, permanent peace could be obtained. This is clearly impossible unless the great powers of the earth renounce their imperialistic designs. This again seems impossible unless these great nations cease to believe in soul-destroying competition and cease to desire to multiply wants and

therefore increase their material possessions.

It is my conviction that the root of the evil is want of a living faith in a living God. It is a first-class human tragedy that peoples of the earth who claim to believe in the message of Jesus, whom they describe as Prince of Peace, show little of that belief in actual practice. It is painful to see sincere Christian divines limiting the scope of Jesus' message to select individuals.

I have been taught from my childhood, and I have tested the truth by experience, that the primary virtues of mankind are possible of cultivation by the meanest of the human species. It is this undoubted universal possibility that distinguishes the humans from the rest of God's creation. If even one great nation were unconditionally to perform the supreme act of renunciation, many of us would see in our lifetime visible peace established on earth.

### LIN YU T'ANG

*Author of "My Country and My People"*

**P**ERMANENT peace is at present not possible in Europe because of the following maladjustments:

First, we buy and sell as internationalists, but think and feel as nationalists.

Second, we are only half-thinking and half-feeling animals. The course of human events is still dictated not by human intelligence but by our animal passions of fear, hatred and desire for revenge. So long as Europe is ruled by three men with big jaws—Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin—there is likely to be war.

Third, all international conferences fail because delegates represent the interests of their respective nations, and there is no world statesman to represent the common interests of Europe as a whole.

Fourth, Fascism lives on the promise of war and must redeem its own cheques. Permanent peace *will* be possible—

First, when Europeans read Lao-tse and have more mellow wisdom and cynicism. (Only cynics will ever save the world.)

Second, when there is universal moral corruption and officers and men cultivate desertion as the highest virtue. It takes a worse catastrophe than the last war to teach Europe this lesson.

Third, when thinkers have more influence over politics and there is a "Brotherhood of Good Europeans"—bad Italians, Germans and Frenchmen—who will put justice before country.

*Photo: The Times*



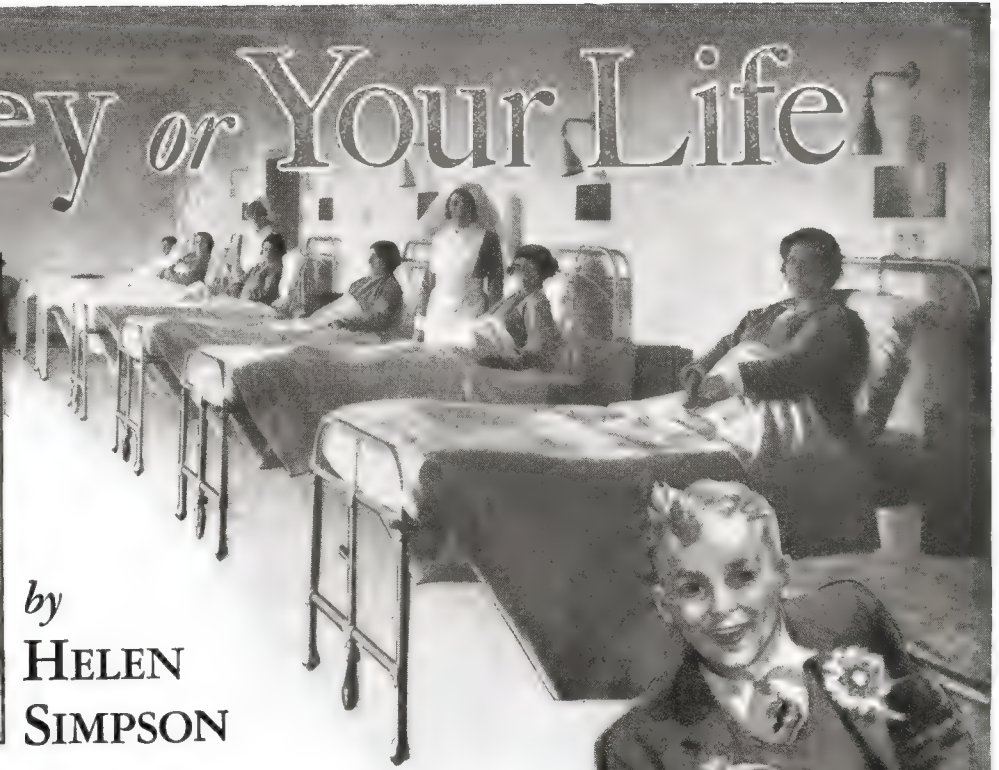


# Money or Your Life

Photos: Coster and Topical



by  
**HELEN  
SIMPSON**



**Health is a question of money. And every year the cost is going up.**

**C**HARITY may begin at home; but, luckily for many of us, it does not end there. The Charity Commissioners have jurisdiction over some eighty thousand endowed charities in England and Wales alone, of which about nine hundred are hospitals of one sort or another. Where the main income is derived from gifts, the hospital is classed as voluntary; and it is the struggle of voluntary hospitals to keep their end up against those financed (quite involuntarily) by the ratepayer, that is exciting the medical world to-day.

It is all a question of money. Health itself, nowadays, is a question of money; you can tinker a very faulty human mechanism into going order if you have enough of it. But every year the cost of such tinkering is going up.

For example. Fifty years ago a poor man would go to the nearest doctor's surgery, where, after a very brief examination, he would be given some pink medicine for which he paid three-pence, with one penny back when he returned the bottle. Now the same man goes to his club or panel doctor, who sends him off with a letter to a hospital. There, for the disease previously dealt with by pink medicine at three-pence, he is given the use of X-rays, ultra-violet light or even radium, to the tune of several thousand pounds' worth of apparatus. The difference in cost between sodium bicarbonate and radium represents the odds against the charitable institution surviving.

It looks, at first sight, as though the voluntary hospitals had not much chance. Borough or Town Councils have only to clap a penny or so on to the rates, and there at once is a very pretty pocketful of money to be spent on health. Boroughs and towns can afford to build up-to-date wards, buy expensive apparatus and give good diet to their patients. The citizen pays. He has to.

Against this pleasant certainty of an income which can be stretched to cover all reasonable emergencies, set the plight of the treasurer of any voluntary institution. He knows very well that his yearly expenses are fixed, while two-thirds of his yearly income are quite uncertain. He has got to consider, and seriously, every kind of expedient, dignified or not. He has got to let his students loose now and then in fancy dress with collecting boxes, to authorise jumble sales, to try to get round the police regulations affecting competitions (which may or may not be gambling), to set the probable yield of a full-page advertisement in a newspaper against its cost. True, he gets most of the actual doctoring done for him free, since only the minor posts in any voluntary hospital carry a salary, and that a pitifully small one. True, he often has at his back a long tradition of service which gives prestige, which in turn commands money. But his every budget is a battle, and each new project—rebuilding, purchases of radium, apparatus to be replaced—gives him nightmare when he asks himself how it is going to be paid for.

What, then, keeps the voluntary hospitals going? First, the fact that they have almost a monopoly of medical teaching. Secondly, that there is among the English poorer people, who occupy most of the beds, a horror of State or municipal charity, which has the reputation for being soulless and heartless and perfunctorily given. It is not reasonable, of course; still, the prejudice is there, and dies hard. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge." The Bumbledom of the eighteen-thirties sticks in memory's gullet, and not all the blandishments of County Councilors can wash it down—as yet.

But look for a moment at what this fidelity to the voluntary system actually

costs the patient, for whose benefit it exists.

To begin with, he does not get his bed or his medical attention for nothing, as is popularly supposed. Before he is admitted for treatment an Almoner sounds him as to his income and general right to be helped. For the most part the necessary inquiries are kindly made, but they have to be searching, and they are as inescapable as those on an income-tax form. This Means Test is the first discomfort the patient has to face, and he must consider his answers



carefully, for possession of the wrong income will land him in a very curious position. He may, if the amount he offers is insufficient, find himself despatched with a card to the Poor Law Infirmary, where again he is questioned; and if, in the judgment of the authority there, he is considered not quite poor enough for admission to non-paying wards, back he goes to the original hospital, which may or may not accept him, according to the pressure on its accommodation, or the mood of the Almoner at the time.

Next. If he is not bad enough for a bed, but needs treatment of one kind or another, he will be told to come for it to the Out-patient department on such and such a day. Mostly the rooms used for waiting are gloomy, and their hard benches are occupied by sufferers in rows, some of them obviously in great pain, others disfigured or crippled. In these not inspiring surroundings he may wait anything from one to five hours for attention. No appointment for a definite hour can be made. Why not? Doctors in private practice find themselves able to run their work more or less by the clock, dealing with patients whose time is, supposedly, their own. But the voluntary hospital, which exists to serve the poor, refuses to realise that the loss of half a day's work may mean the loss of half a day's money to a labourer.

Suppose, though, that there is no dealing with his trouble at home. An operation is necessary, perhaps, or a course of treatment beyond the skill of his wife is recommended. A bed is the next thing; and for that bed the patient—unless his illness takes a dramatically dangerous turn—may wait a week, three-weeks, two months. But he gets it at last and settles down in it, with his few belongings in the cupboard at its head, and his temperature chart at the foot, to get well.

As the first step towards this end, he might be permitted a comfortable and unbroken sleep. But a ward at night is full of noises; snoring, vomiting, moans, and occasionally (from behind a screen) the sounds of somebody dying. Towards morning it grows quieter; but towards morning, that is to say, between five and six o'clock, the patients have to be waked and washed. This is a part of the night-nurse's duty, which must be done before she is relieved at 8.30, and a ward of some twenty-five people is not made clean and tidy under two hours—mostly it takes longer. Could not the day nurses come on duty an hour later? That would keep them in the ward till after 9 o'clock at night; and the probationers have to attend lectures after they come off duty. Would it not be possible to have three shifts of nurses, as they do in New Zealand? That means increasing the accommodation, food, laundry and pay by one-third; and where is the money to come from?

So the patient wakes early, and some hours later the consultant begins his round. He has a troop of students at his heels, probably, since many of the voluntary hospitals are teaching hospitals as well, places where the medical student learns his job. This he does by going round the wards, generally in



**A group of out-patients waiting their turn at the London Hospital.**

a crowd, and studying the sick people as they are examined by the consultant in charge of them. Thus the growths, the malformations, the diseases become matter for public demonstration, and patients have no power to refuse to be lectured upon, or to have their bodies exposed for that purpose.

It is not only the students' inexperience which is tested in the wards. Roughly, three out of every six nurses are probationers, girls of eighteen to twenty years old, who are learning how to handle sick people. This is not a knack which a few weeks will teach; and though probationers are not entrusted with the very responsible tasks of nursing, yet even the minor attentions, clumsily performed, can impose suffering rather than relieve it.

Remember, all the time, that the patient is paying just as much as he can afford. This may not cover all the expense of keeping him; an individual, according to the hospital he goes to and the disease from which he suffers, costs from £3 to £5 a week to feed and tend. The more philosophic patients follow and agree with the hospitals' argument, that by thus lending themselves for teaching purposes they are paying the difference in kind. Those who are unable, for one reason or another, to regard the matter in this light, suffer not a little and have no redress. Patients in private wards, such as some institutions possess, are not expected to be thus examined. Question, at what level of



*Sketches by D. L. Mays;  
photos by Topical and  
Wide World*

income does an illness cease to be public property?

Suppose that the sufferer has secured his bed, and does not object to being demonstrated and practised upon by embryo doctors and nurses, still one matter remains, of some importance to him: the quality of his food. If it is to do him good, in his unhealthy state, it ought to be of good quality, fresh and temptingly cooked. But is it?

So far as most of the voluntary hospitals are concerned, the answer must be No. There is not enough money to buy best-quality stuff; and—here the main difficulty lies—food for patients and staff has been, until lately, nobody's business. That is, no person with the necessary knowledge and training has been given the handling of it. In many hospitals the Matron has the ordering of supplies.



# *The plight of the voluntary hospitals: can we afford to let them slip behind?*

She has not been used to hotel catering, which is what the feeding of five or six hundred people comes to. This would be a job for a highly-paid expert, such as the big catering firms employ, helped by a dietician who could give advice on food values. Money might even be saved by employing such an expert, who would buy in bulk, and take advantage of the run of the markets. A glut of herrings or green vegetables, the arrival of meat ships from the Argentine; these events might be noted and find their place in a scheme of scientific feeding. "But," as a Matron was once heard, in all simplicity, to observe, "if I give them nice food they eat such a lot of it." So she continues in official command of the kitchen, thereby keeping appetites down, and saving money. Sometimes she passes on the job to a Sister House-keeper, who does her buying under the same disabilities. Sometimes a steward caters for the medical staff, the Matron for the nursing staff and a third authority for the patients. Over them all lies the shadow of the Board of Governors with their eternal, unceasing slogan: "Keep expenses down." And meanwhile

nurses are badly housed, they work a 72-hour week for £50 a year, and these prospects do not tempt probationers. Rehouse them, pay them decently—but where's the money to come from?

In the past it has come from three sources: subscriptions, legacies and patients' contributions, eked out with an occasional grant from King Edward's Fund. But the subscribers are taxed heavily for State health services, and do not see why they should support two kinds of hospitals. Legacies are not to be reckoned on. Benefactors are capricious; and even when they do come down handsomely, unless special precautions are taken, death and legacy duties make large holes in the capital sum before it is paid over. Often a bequest has conditions tied to it. For example, one hospital receives several hundreds a year on condition that its chapel remains in its present position and unaltered in every respect. A whole rebuilding scheme stubs its toe against this bequest. Again, money is left for the upkeep of "beds for gentlefolk." How are gentlefolk defined legally? Another cannot sell its valuable site, because the

land is held only on condition that a hospital stands on it. Always concessions have to be made, and the future mortgaged, for the sake of a little ready money, cash down.

As for the third source of income, contributions by patients, these cannot possibly be increased if the voluntary hospitals are to fulfil the purpose for which they were founded.

The voluntary hospitals, in spite of all these shifts and uncertainties, have to deal with more patients than their beds will hold. Their very popularity is the cause of their financial embarrassment. They exist to help the sick poor, and to them, with touching faith, the sick poor come in unmanageable numbers. There is something very fine in the spirit which makes doctors and nurses give their services for a pittance, while the patients lend their sufferings that these may learn their work.

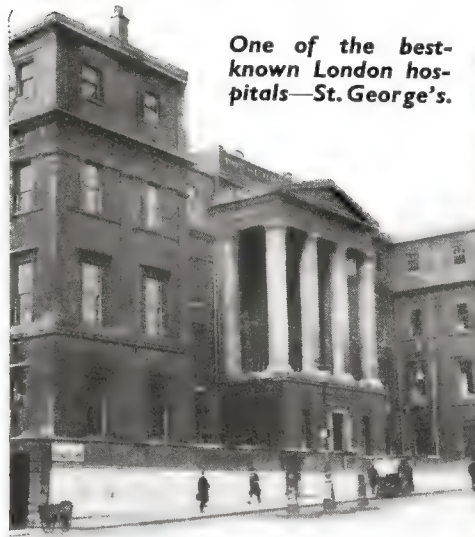
The only question is, whether these sacrifices on the part of the voluntary hospitals' patients and staff are really necessary. An unprejudiced mind cannot be sure that they are.

Health should be a national trust, and to some extent is so. Ill-health is quite certainly a national liability. The whole question has ceased to be one for the charitably inclined; it has become a matter for statesmen and financiers.

The public, for some reason, and in spite of National Health Insurance, is slow to see this. The doctors and nurses of the voluntary hospitals see, but resent it. Why? They both accept registration by the State as a guarantee against the exploitation of nursing or doctoring by dishonest and incompetent persons. Why are they content to leave to chance the financing of those institutions wherein they learn their job? No question but those in charge of the hospitals' balance sheets are both honest and competent. All the same, they are taking the most desperate chances in order to carry on; borrowing to rebuild, trusting to luck and legacies to find the money for repayment. They command an immense fund of devotion and skill, cancelled out to some extent by the adverse balance at their various banks. For how long will they continue to prefer this uneconomic existence?

It will come, the great State service comprising all hospitals. But before the reorganisation is complete a good many renunciations will have to be made. Subscribers must exchange the pleasant heart-warming glow which comes from giving to charity for the cold satisfaction which accompanies payment of a higher rate of income tax. Doctors must give up the prestige and emoluments of private practice for the lesser rewards and consideration accorded to a civil servant. Patients must give up their uncomfortable individualism, and submit to be taken care of by institutions whose tradition they distrust.

When all this has been accomplished, a small body of citizens will, for the first time, know what it is to sleep sound. Governors of hospitals, treasurers, members of appeal committees—they will all sleep sound and wake to sing in their baths Hosannas to the New Jerusalem.



**One of the best-known London hospitals—St. George's.**



**Above are two views of "Barts."  
At the top: babies being given a bath, and below: the dispensary.**

the nurses are clearing away untouched plates in their wards, listening to apologetic voices: "I didn't seem to fancy any dinner to-day, Sister."

It is nobody's fault, really. This confusion, this overlapping, is inevitable in a system which has grown up on charitable impulses, in fits and starts, and which never knows from year to year whether it is solvent or not. Uncertainty about income is at the root of all hospital evils. The food is cold and unappetising, perhaps, because the kitchen is badly situated with regard to the wards. Rebuild the kitchen—but where's the money to come from? Patients have to wait for attention longer than they should, because the hospital is understaffed. Why? Because the



*They think it's awful,  
but I can't see what  
difference it makes*



*Also I was not left  
without admonitions.*

# My Husband is *Younger* than I am

**M**Y husband is younger than I am. For the life of me, I can't tell why that is important—any more important than that he has brown eyes and hair, prefers golf to tennis or likes steak and onions.

But it is important to other people. People aren't interested in my age. Nor, *per se*, in my husband's age. But let them find out that I am older than he and, strangely enough, they are immediately all agog.

"Isn't that awful?" say my friends, if they know. "To be older than your husband!"

I feel that I should have burst into tears of shame. I can hardly believe they were referring only to my age. Why is it so amazing that my husband and I happened to be born a few years apart? The "few," my friends will be glad to tell you, is an understatement.

I can see these friends, and others, too, shivering now away from this "confession." It is such bad taste to be personal in articles! In fiction, under the thinnest layer of disguise, you can say the cruellest things and no one ever accuses you of anything. But write an article on any subject at all and everyone is shocked. And for me to admit in public that my husband is actually younger, was born years after I was! What dreadful things shall I do next!

A few years ago G. B. Stern wrote an article in which she "confessed" that she married a man younger than herself. Perhaps she was forgiven, for Miss Stern admitted that her husband was only three and a half years younger than she. That makes her a mere amateur. Hardly able to enter the "older than your husband" competition. There is more than twice three and a half years' difference be-

tween my husband's age and my own.

Unless my husband was suffering from a horrible astigmatism, and I have found him peculiarly clear-sighted, he knew before we were married that I was older—what he was letting himself in for. People he knew certainly went into the subject thoroughly enough with him. He was a mere boy who ought to be warned. I was at least ten years older than he—and looked it! I was an old adventuress devouring an innocent lamb.

Nor was I left without admonitions. It was absurd for me to "throw myself away" on so young a man. Did I want to make myself ridiculous?

When warnings proved of no avail, there were prophecies as to the duration of our marriage. "I'll give it six months," was, I believe, the usual conclusion, though some generous souls predicted that we might stay together a year. Only a few were more optimistic.

We have been married five years. I know that those years have been the most pleasant, the most peaceful and at the same time the most exciting, I have ever spent. My husband is good enough to say he has never been happier.

How long shall we stay happy or together? I don't know. But I haven't noticed that marriages between people of the same age, or even where the husband is the conventional couple of

years older, are always ideal or permanent.

The first thing you hear when you marry a man younger than yourself is, "It may be all right now, but just wait a few years!" And then the most dire portrait is painted.

When I'm in my forties my husband will be in his thirties. So you'd naturally suppose

that when I'm in my fifties my husband will be in his forties. I begin to be a little frightened! And when I'm in my sixties, my husband should have reached his fifties, anyhow. And that, you'll grant, is bad enough.

But here, according to practically everyone, is where the phenomenon of being married to a man younger than yourself comes in.

Everyone admits that when I am in my forties my husband will be a gay youngster of thirty or so. But when I have reached my fifties, by some magic it seems that my husband will have receded into his twenties again. And if I reach my sixties still married, my boy husband will, by that time, have gone back into his teens! Age, which overtakes the wife, seems to give to the husband the fountain of youth.

Certainly, even in the fairly recent generations, women did age more quickly than men. Women of forty, in the reign of Victoria, settled down comfortably into middle age. They bothered neither about professions nor waist-lines. And Papa, a bit of a devil, though actually a few years older than his wife, was still spry enough to give a gay-nineties smirk to the ladies.

When a woman in those days was married, she was married. And done for. She may have hated her husband—and such hates were not unheard of, psychologists say, but she kept her emotions buried in her subconscious and never let more than a hint of them escape. A divorce was a blot on the family. And if a woman did get a divorce, what could she do? No other man would marry a divorced woman except under the most unusual circumstances.

Careers were little better than a disgrace. "Higher education" was frowned on. An office was certainly no place for a good girl. A private secretary, alone in a room with a man, was someone to raise eyebrows about. If you *had* to work you could teach, though teaching had one serious disadvantage—teachers seldom married. And an old maid was



**Men of fifty can have young  
minds. You keep on learning.**





by  
**THYRA SAMTER  
WINSLOW**

little proud of his feat. His wife, on the other hand, is usually rather grateful because a younger man found her desirable. She doesn't want to take chances that will jeopardise her marriage. She tries to please her husband, to do things to make him comfortable and happy. She wants security. A marriage of this type seldom ends in the divorce courts."

Certainly, marriages where the ages of the partners vary do not add any new economic problems. Nor do possible progeny suffer in any way because of this difference in age.

I like to think that I married my husband because I liked him as a man and as a companion, because I "fell in love" with him. I like to believe that age had nothing to do with it. Perhaps subconsciously I had the feeling that if I married a man younger than myself I should regain a bit of my lost youth. If that were one of the reasons for my choice, most women will admit that there is something to be said in its favour.

What, then, with this great chasm of years between us, can my husband and I have in common?

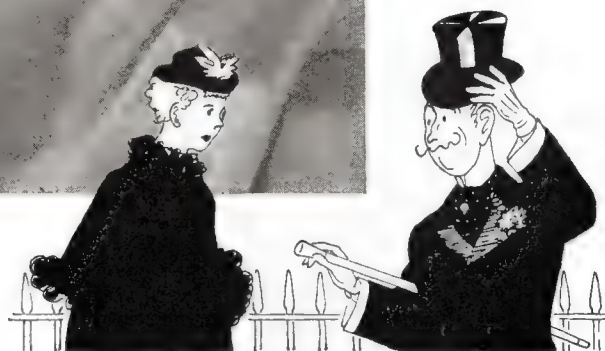
In most things my husband is much smarter than I am. He is a logical, thoughtful person and many of the things he knows I didn't know at his age — and won't know at any age. Books on banking and business administration and economics which he seems to enjoy I can neither understand nor want to understand. He is far more calm, contained, reserved and dignified. But I can't believe that these traits are be-

cause he was born a few years later than I was.

My husband is fond of sports. He has won a couple of cups at golf. He made a hole in one last summer. I *must* put that in! He plays a fair game of tennis, likes swimming, and is enthusiastic over football. I loathe any form of sport or exercise. I walk only when there is no other way of seeing things, or when I'm in town and want to look at people and shop windows.

I didn't like sports when I was sixteen and I don't see why I should make myself miserable pretending to take an interest in them now.

Except for one cocktail, I do not like a drink. My husband likes a drink occasionally, and he can drink everything. He likes to play cards, especially bridge and poker, and will bet on anything. I



**Papa used to give a gay-nineties smirk to the ladies.**

NICOLAS BENTLEY DREW THE PICTURES

only a trifle better than a woman dead—you were a failure. Women aged rapidly. What else was there for them to do? Youth was important only because you married while you were young, or not at all.

You married a man a few years older than you were so as to give him a good start. You'd soon catch up with him. For it was an accepted fact—this, indeed, may be the first refutation of it—that women grew older faster than men. I hope it has disappeared with some of the other exploded theories of the Victorians. For I believe that women grow old at exactly the same rate as do men.

Not that we have found any secret of staying young. Even with our best masseuses and plastic surgeons and beauty specialists doing what they can, we grow old. And each generation of lost youth is still a little sad.

The best we can do, to-day, is not to grow old quite so rapidly. We can grow old with our men—instead of before them. Our lipsticks and rouges may salve only our own vanity, but at least they give us confidence in ourselves. We remain active in the work we have chosen and we aren't on the shelf at

twenty-five. And while I do not underestimate youth, middle age is not without its pleasant moments, and these are not confined to learning a new recipe or how to embroider. And age itself doesn't seem so important as it used to.

Besides mental age is not the same as physical age. Some men—and women—are mentally old at twenty. And men and women of fifty can have young minds. You can keep on learning when sixty, or close up your mind at sixteen. Why should those of the same mental age have any lesser chance of happiness than those who choose partners of the same physical age.

One friend of mine, who is a brilliant young lawyer, went so far as to say, "There's a greater chance of happiness when the woman is older. When a man marries an older woman he is just a



## My Husband is Younger than I am

am stupid at cards and hate all kinds of gambling.

And I do not think our differences in taste have anything to do with our ages. He will undoubtedly play golf at sixty, and at seventy I shall still loathe football.

Have I drawn a picture of two absolutely incompatible people? An older woman married to a younger man, with nothing in common. We may have a few things in common, after all. We both like people. All sorts of people. We like to be with people—and discuss them at length afterwards. My husband accuses me of drawing false conclusions, based mostly on imagination, and I think he is too conservative, but we usually agree about whom we like.

We both read every minute we can. He reads twice as rapidly as I do, but I have more time for reading. We usually like the same books and, when we don't, it's just as much fun arguing about them. We both used to like to dance, but do not dance much any more. Of course it's old age coming on with me, though he got tired of dancing before I did.

Of course we both enjoy the theatre. And the same plays. We both like the wireless in moderation—and we agree as to what is moderation. Usually we like the same programmes. This year, to the surprise of us both, after years of indifference, we find we enjoy films. We like to read in bed. We think a well-cooked meal is of great importance. We both hate what we think is pretence. And we both enjoy sitting for hours talking with people we like.

Psychologists usually say that we fall in love with a person because the person reminds us of someone, most of the time the parent of the opposite sex, whom we loved when we were young. We women are frequently supposed to marry men because they are like our fathers. Or because we want to be mothers to them—psychologists differ here. And wives are often supposed to be substitutes for the mother who has been taken away.

Perhaps my husband prefers an older woman because of a Mother Complex. Consciously, he does not see that I resemble his mother.

Of course I spoil him. All the wives I know spoil their husbands and take great delight in it. I try to have for dinner the things he enjoys most—and dinner when he wants it. I plan our evenings so that he won't miss too much sleep. He must be in his office at nine and his work requires a clear brain. I do not invite people whom he does not like—which may explain to a few people why I meet them for luncheon instead of asking them home. I don't read a book or a magazine when he wants it—I can read it during his business hours. I try to see that the machinery of the household is more or less concealed, or at least running fairly smoothly when he is at home. I laugh at his jokes—but then most of the time I think they are funny. I do not treat him as if he were my son, though, as do most other women, I say "men are only little boys underneath," when something he does is not quite understandable.

Though my husband is decidedly thoughtful for me, I do not think it is

the thoughtfulness of a son to his mother. I was an only child and like most only children I was quite spoiled. My husband has continued this spoiling and smiles tolerantly as he does a hundred little unnecessary things for me.

When we were first married I had the horrible feeling that hotel porters might think he was my son, or would refuse to give us rooms. However, they neither smiled nor questioned. Perhaps they were accustomed to couples who varied in ages. Or didn't care.

Occasionally I do feel like the black-moustached villain who has kidnapped the innocent child. I feel this most keenly on early grey mornings. I wake up and look into the mirror. On my dressing-table is one of those delightful magnifying mirrors complete with a blue light, supposed to simulate daylight. It is, instead, slightly sepulchral. I behold a magnified horror. I have dark circles under my eyes. There are lines round my mouth, to which clings some of last night's lipstick of a slightly purple colour. My skin looks haggard and sallow. My hair is dishevelled.

I look across to my husband's bed. If I am lucky he is still asleep. His face is soft and smooth and young and gentle. He might be fifteen, except that no youth of fifteen could ever grow such a beard! At my age—*this* is the man to whom I am married! A great terror comes over me.

I rush into the bathroom and take a shower. Then my softest bath powder and most expensive perfume. Blood begins to flow through the old veins. I apply my most careful make-up, the specially blended powder I can't afford and a lot of mascara.

By the time I've put on my freshest dress I'm able to face another day and view with equanimity the fact that I'm getting on and will look even older to-morrow, that I'm married to a very young man who will look even younger to-morrow, and that in spite of it all life is usually very pleasant. I can still smile when my husband tells me that I exaggerate—that I look quite all right early in the morning.

But the disturbing fear of getting old remains. The knowledge that some day even my best mascara and bravest lipstick won't disguise the fact that I am old. And that my husband is young. And that the world is full of luscious young girls who have, as yet, no fear of age.

It is more than possible that if my husband and I ever do separate, and I hope we never shall, it will not be over the fact of age. For undoubtedly I should dread getting old no matter to whom I was married. And so far, age

has been one of the things we have never quarrelled about, and like most people with decided opinions we have quarrelled long and determinedly on many things. But some day . . .

Even so, why such a fuss? I have had five enjoyable years. And as my husband points out to me, the percentage in the difference in our ages grows less each year. It sounds comforting. And five years of happiness have been well worth marrying for. Many marriages achieve less. Perhaps the coming year will be happy, too. That will make six. And the year after that . . .

I like old people. I have an immense sympathy with them. They have been through things and, if they are pleasant people, they have a warm and comforting understanding. On the other hand, I do not like very well most people of my own age or just a little older, middle-aged people, unless they are unusual or unusually alive and interesting. The rhythm of their minds makes me impatient or nervous. Generally I enjoy myself better with younger people. And because I'm inside myself looking out, I can see only the younger people and I forget how I look to them.

Only occasionally am I forcibly reminded of how I look. An unexpected mirror. Or a childhood friend. And I remember the story, I think it was by Edith Wharton, in which the four old nuns, who have not seen even a reflection of themselves for years, receive a snapshot which a visitor to the convent had taken. They stand in a little group and gaze at it eagerly. And each one says the same thing, "I know you three. But who is that strange old woman with you? And where am I?" Perhaps if I dared face things as they are. . . . But how do I know things as they are? And who really dares?

Never having been a beauty, I have no beauty to lose. Age must be more tragic for the woman who was once beautiful. I still have a grand zest for living, a desire, an eagerness, a wanting to know about things, a great fever for what is ahead. Some day these things may be gone. I hope that if they are I shall be strong enough not to cling to the man who, then, will be too young for me.

It seems to me, now, that the woman who marries a man younger than herself gets all the best of it. More youth. New enthusiasms. The viewpoint of a younger generation. Yet I do not think I have cheated my husband by letting him marry an older woman. He says he does not think of age, does not look enviously at the men he knows who are married to slim young things just turned twenty. I like to believe him when he says he is more contented with marriage than he had ever hoped to be.

Marriage is not a finished, static thing. I can't say that my marriage is a success, or even that the institution of marriage is a success. My own belief, now, is that a physical difference in age is of no importance. So far, it has not mattered.

To-morrow, age may mean as little in my marriage as it does to-day. Some of the happiest couples I know have even a greater disparity in their ages. Perhaps things are loveliest when they are tinged with uncertainty?



**No youth could grow such a beard.**





Herring fishing is still the mainstay of the Hull people.

Rosita Forbes, a recent portrait, and below, a snapshot of a friendly chat with Scotch lassies.

Photo : Coster

Photo : Sport & General

# Adventure *in* Britain

A LECTURE tour is the back door to any country, and at the back door one hears all the news. For the hour or so that one stands on a platform, looking over the footlights at a blur of faces bereft of individuality, one is rewarded by other hours spent in exploring the characters of the different towns and of the people who make them. One no longer thinks of England and Scotland, but of each city by the special idiosyncrasies which distinguish it from its neighbours. Glasgow, for instance, grim, grey and enterprising, whose most sporting parson spent the fortnight of his summer holiday, not in Blackpool, but in Abyssinia—Glasgow is proud of her industrial reputation, of her magnificent double storey trams with their halfpenny fares and of the fact that she dug the Clyde. The first thing visitors notice is the soft speech of her people.

"Well, what's the best you can tell me about Glasgow?" I asked the gentle-voiced young man who accompanied me from the lecture-hall to factory and dock. "There's a boom in carpet-making," he replied, "and in publishing, too, because of the huge demand for these new sixpenny books. I hear the local printers can't turn them out fast enough. As for Templeton's carpet factory, it's never been so busy. The new housing schemes have given a tremendous impetus to the attendant trades."

So to Templeton's we went and were told they have more employees to-day than ever before. But two-thirds of them are women.

In the designing rooms I saw rows

of girls in bright jumpers with beautifully arranged hair, bent over paint-pots and paper. "But we find the men are more original. They provide the new ideas. Girls are mostly content to copy," explained the manager.

In the winding department young women are earning up to £3 a week. But many of them are supporting unemployed fathers and brothers. A superin-

Photo : Stewart



**ROSITA FORBES**, *world-wide traveller,*  
*finds a world of interest here at home*



tendent explained, "They have a sense of responsibility and it's not often you'll find them letting down their families. But you wouldn't recognise them at night when they're off to the dance-halls. Their tickets cost them one-and-six, but they can afford it, even if they have to treat their partners." So, owing to the pressure of unemployment, the logical positions of men and women are often reversed. "It's the age of engines and women," said the superintendent. "The former supply the physical strength, the latter deftness and adaptability."

I asked a pretty girl in the spooling department which, with its piles of huge, gay coloured bobbins, reminded me of a toy-shop, whether she was ever bored with the monotony of her work. "Oh, no!" she said. "It's fun. Look, first I wind a blue thread—then perhaps a yellow one—"

All the walls were windows. There was a good deal of laughter and occasionally a voice humming in tune with the machinery. "How long are you going to stay here?" I asked a blonde. "I wouldn't like to work when I'm married," she replied with an eye on five bobbins, "but I'll be lucky if I find a husband who can keep me."

Before the war Germany and Czechoslovakia used to compete with British carpet-making, but now the chief rivals are cheap, hand-made Indian rugs which, under the Ottawa agreement, come in free of tax. In Persia, the average wage paid to carpet-workers, small boys of seven or eight, capable of tying eighty knots a minute, amounts to three halfpence for an eleven-hour day, whereas the lowest rate in Glasgow for girls of fourteen who have just left school is approximately twelve times as much.

I was sorry to leave Templeton's, where I'd been shown the loveliest copies of Persian hunting carpets and French rugs, for the Back Lands in Calton and Bridgeton, Mr. Maxton's constituency. Here the tenements are built back to back, so that they get little light or air. The "houses" (what we should call flats) are crowded three or four on a landing with a common lavatory on the staircase. They look into a sort of well or "close," and there are often as many as eight or ten people living in two rooms. Some of these "houses" have beds recessed in the walls like cupboards. The doors that used to ensure warmth and semi-suffocation have been removed, sometimes to sell for a few pence.

It is estimated that approximately half the population of Glasgow are living in such one- and two-roomed dwellings. The bright spots are the new Corporation houses gradually taking the place of the slums. These admirable buildings look on to large and airy squares. In them each family has three or four rooms with plenty of windows, but it will be a long time before all the Back Lands disappear.

Russia has placed orders in Glasgow for coal-cutting machinery and steel tools. Warships are being built for Portugal. The *Queen Mary* has given employment to some thousands, but still there are 106,000 out of work.

Clydeside is silent. "Two of the big yards have thirty-four berths between them," said a ship's architect. "And I

doubt if there are thirty-four orders on the river."

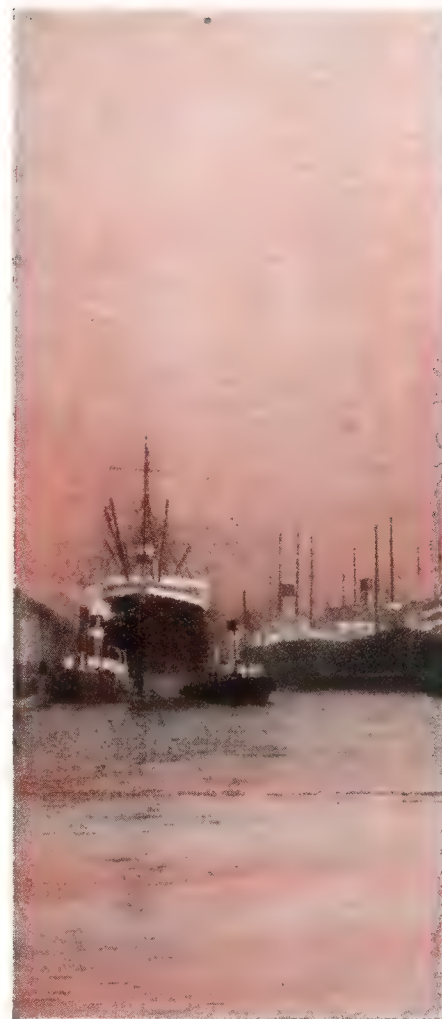
I visited the University Settlement on the docks and talked with pattern-makers and caulkers who had once earned £6 and £7 a week. They longed for work and said no man could be wholly normal year after year without it. They praised the various settlements and societies which provide classes, physical training and occupation for the unemployed, but said they only "touch the fringe."

"They've got hold of perhaps four to six thousand in Glasgow and the rest of the men give their time to working out the winners. They spend a couple of shillings a week on penny football pools for which there's ten thousand goes every Saturday in prizes. They go to the dogs most nights and save on food. There's many doesn't know the taste of anything but bread and tea, with a lump of fish in batter when they've made a bit. It's football which keeps them going." My informant, who had learned a specialist trade and practised it in one yard for twenty years, launched into a description of the battles between Rangers and Celtic, before an audience of 30,000, at which Protestants cheerfully broke the heads of Catholics, or vice versa, according to which team won.

At the settlement, I watched dock labourers transforming themselves into carpenters. They buy their own wood. A rivet-heater told me he could make a chest of drawers for three and sixpence, or a wardrobe for fourteen shillings. "First we all of us made beds—they worked out at three or four shillings apiece," he explained. "One fellow had nothing in his house but orange boxes. Now he's made himself a complete lot of furniture."

"Why don't more men come?" I asked.

"Twelve years out of work gets you down and it's hard to start again," said someone, and the soft-voiced young man who was still at my elbow added, "These places are up against a lot of things. There are the Communists who set out to keep the men discontented and the



Unions which are afraid of unemployed being trained as handy men and taking on jobs at lower wages than the fully qualified—apathy among the men too, for there's no courage won't wear out in time."

But there's still lots of pluck on Clydeside. At the University settlement I saw a whole roomful of toys, cleverly made and coloured, destined for the hospitals.

Photo: Will F. Taylor



The magnificent new bridge which spans the Tyne at Newcastle.





Photo: G.P.A.

**"Liverpool is sea-minded. She is the goal of so many sea-roads."**

own sacks and sacking. I remember seeing an offspring of a Dundee mill run by Dundee Scots, turning out thousands of coffee bags a day in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

A few years ago fifty-four per cent. of the Scotch jute-workers were unemployed, but trade recovery has reduced these figures to twenty-five per cent. today. The main problem, however, remains. The owner of a combined mill and factory explained it to me. "It looks as if the backward countries like India, where wages are negligible, are destined to take from us the whole of the coarser trades. Where fine work is necessary, Britain may still be able to compete, but while Germany, Italy, and Czechoslovakia pay half or three-quarters of the wages we do and while the East works in the village streets for practically nothing, we've no hope of the cheap market."

In Dundee, the "shawled women" of mill and factory have given place to girls with shingles and permanent waves. They've the best heads of hair in the town. "And why not when the jute oil gets all over us!" explained an independent young person who considered home restrictions tedious and, earning good wages, was sharing a room with some fellow-workers.

Dundee makes the famous marmalade, which finds its way into Sultans' harems to be eaten as a sweet. It possesses the splendid Tay bridge and is proud of the thrift represented by three separate churches under one steeple, as well as of its rigorous climate, which it confesses that Westerners are sometimes "too soft to stand up to." And Dundee has a remarkable number of cinemas.

A woman whose husband is earning 72s. a week, but whose children go shabby to school, explained, "It's their father's fault. He doesn't think he's doing his duty by them, unless he takes them to the pictures four or five times a week."

At the other end of the scale, an old woman, existing on an inadequate dole, creeps nightly into the threepenny seats. "I don't have to look at the screen," she said. "I sleep most of the time, but it's warm and it saves me light and heat at home."

In Edinburgh, the people pride themselves on their moderation. They are not so impulsive and warm-hearted as the Western Scots. "We are the scholars and they are the industrialists," said a departmental manager of the Telephone Company. And he added: "Don't you tell me women are better telephonists than men. Here in the North" (his r's broadened) "the men'll take a lot more trouble to get you a number than the girls will!"

Edinburgh has changed. The shops on Prince's Street used to be discreet, expensive and inviolate by new fashions. There are still a few holy of holies dedicated to tweeds and brogues, but much of Prince's Street has spread into plate-glass windows with a shower of tickets behind them. Edinburgh, most beautiful city in the world, has gone modern.

The men had given up an afternoon a week for months in order to provide a Christmas treat for unknown children.

Perth is famous for tweeds, but at the moment her most prosperous industries are whisky, insurance and rat-poison, with a cold cure as a side-line!

Throughout the North, heroic efforts have been made by factory and mill owners to keep open at any cost. At Perth, a famous dye-works, threatened by the competition of twelve-hour cleaners all over the country, has arranged with the Trades Union to work shorter hours in order to avoid dismissals. "The men were most understanding and helpful," explained a director, "but there was one woman on the board who simply couldn't see sense." Presumably she saw instead what the necessary reduction in the men's wages would mean to household budgets already strained.

At the Moncrieff glass-works, I saw men working up groups of five, turning molten spheres which they swing casually at the ends of poles, into eighty foot tubes.

"The best gauge glass for industrial boilers is still made by hand," explained a foreman as a flaming mass with an air bubble in the centre was blown, stretched, twisted, into a ribbon that glowed the whole length of the cavern in which we stood. "The men won't work on new concrete. They like to get their toes into these uneven old floors. It gives them purchase." They won't wear spectacles either, and their eyes

apparently become accustomed to the furnaces.

Glass is a man's job. No women are employed on the manufacturing side, except the girls who burn test tubes into the correct lengths.

When European countries began to make their own boiler gauges instead of importing them from England, Moncrieff's looked round for a side-line in order to keep on their workers. They found it in coloured glass, but they had to engage Spaniards to teach Scots the use of enamels imported from Austria and France.

In a huge attic, with a home-made furnace reminiscent of Heath Robinson, I watched a father and four sons from Barcelona making bowls and jars in every conceivable shade, flecked with gold and silver. "The British have no colour sense," explained the elder Spaniard. "They understand shape, yes." He pointed to a local youth who, with the aid of tools that looked as if they had come out of the Ark, was delicately shaping and engraving a lump of glass. "But they cannot see colour. It is not in them."

All colours look alike while the glass is molten, so it is not surprising that young Scots find it difficult to acquire the sixth sense inherited by imaginative Latins with the craft that has come down to them through the generations.

Dundee and jute are irrevocably connected. At one time, the city shared the trade with Calcutta, but now nearly every country except America makes her



## Adventure in Britain

There is a mammoth Woolworths where night shifts, coming off duty, can drink their morning coffee. And Edinburgh has ceased to keep a thrifty eye on the sixpences. I visited one house where everything except a calendar and the contents of the bookshelves had been bought on the hire purchase system. Here is the American conquest. For like her trans-Atlantic cousins, all Britain is living on one rise ahead. The farmer spends the proceeds of next year's crop and the clerk his next month's salary.

Edinburgh, Perth, Aberdeen, all the proud cities of Scotland are suffering from a dearth of opportunity for educated youth. Years ago, Scotch immigrants poured forth to the ends of the world. They were invariably successful. Scotch shepherds, sugar-planters, cattlemen, engineers and railwaymen developed South America, colonised space, made farms out of deserts and cities where there had been swamps. But now emigration is a closed door. Canada, Argentina and the U.S.A. say they are "full up." The experts who went abroad as a matter of course because the Scot is an adventurer born, have got to find jobs at home and it's a belt-tightening process.

South, then, to England—Newcastle has always been one of my spiritual homes. As soon as I enter the Stoll Theatre, I am conscious of the stalwart friendliness of an audience that includes every type of human being. Newcastle has achieved so much with her coal and her shipping and suffered so much because of them that her imagination is world wide. You don't have to explain things to Newcastle.

In the surrounding country, the unmarried women still hire themselves out as "bondagers," to work for a year in the fields. In summer, they wear huge dark straw hats with neckcloths hanging like curtains and they paint their faces dark red as a protection against the sun. The men of the same class are "hinds," contracting their labour from May till May, and every spring there is a great "fitting," during which hundreds of households change places. They throng the country roads, with all their possessions in hand-carts or on their backs, but the outgoing family leaves its cottage swept and garnished, with a fire laid and sometimes bread baked for the new-comers who will occupy it during the following years.

In Newcastle, they think as hard as they work. I remember a man who'd been to Leningrad telling me he didn't think much of Soviet Russia. "A system which makes gods of machines ain't much use to the workers," he said.

An older man who'd spent most of his life in a factory making electric bulbs, suggested that machinery should be taxed for the number of men robbed of their jobs. "How's a man going to keep his work with a new machine every week?"

"It's the girls who take our jobs," interrupted another. "They get on all right with the machines."

In Liverpool they said the same thing. "With this new machinery, there's more jobs going for women than men." A young man, trying to express a situation that seemed to him fantastic, added:

"It's the wives that'll be keeping the husbands. They'll be the wage-earners. It's——" He couldn't find words to continue.

Liverpool is sea-minded. She is the goal of so many sea-roads. She hears so many sea-tales. Nothing surprises her, not even the famous tunnel, but Liverpool has known a dozen lean years. The older men are concerned not so much with their own troubles as with the spare prospects afforded to their sons. "Work ought to be divided," they said. "We used to look upon a job as just natural, but nowadays it's a luxury, and it isn't fair one should have it and one should go without. There's no sense in one man working overtime and half a dozen standing idle." Laboriously they explained that to-day, with machinery capable of feeding, clothing and otherwise keeping the whole nation, work should be reduced from a matter of hard labour to one of occupation. "Every worker might be forced to take two months' holiday a year and his place filled by an unemployed. It'd be difficult, o' course, in the case of a skilled man, but it'd give the young 'uns a chance to learn."

In Manchester, I found workers in full employment regarded as a privileged

fellow's got to have something to get his hands into." He went on to speak of Hitler's organisation of leisure. "We got too much time on our hands," he said. "If we can't have work, give us something to do." Here is one of the fundamental needs of the big cities—occupation for unwanted leisure.

Hull for me will always be storm-bound, for I arrived there, two hours late, in the middle of a gale which had packed the harbour. A steam-trawler had just fought her way in with a splintered wheel and her top-hamper gone. After fifty-six hours on the bridge, the skipper was frozen stiff, and the whole town was thrilled by a heroism which the fishermen took for granted. After my lecture, we talked of herring and the three-mile limit. A director of a trawling company explained that food fashions change and that kippers can no longer be counted the main dish on a worker's supper-table. Yet the boys of Hull still follow their fathers to the limits of the Arctic circle for the bigger fish, venturing as far North as Bear Island and risking arrest within Norwegian waters in search of a fine catch. At Hull, the fisher lads in sodden blue jerseys talked of the mining strike. They thought it must be a hard life underground, but since the miners "made such a song and dance about mining, they might as well get on with it whenever they had the chance."

The odd thing about miners is that they never do "make a



**"Miners regard their grim work with stoicism."**

class. In olden days, the weavers could count on their four looms. Now mills have no value. Five-sixths of them are idle. Plain weaving is almost at an end. After one of my lectures a man came up to me and said: "In Germany, they do seem to realise a

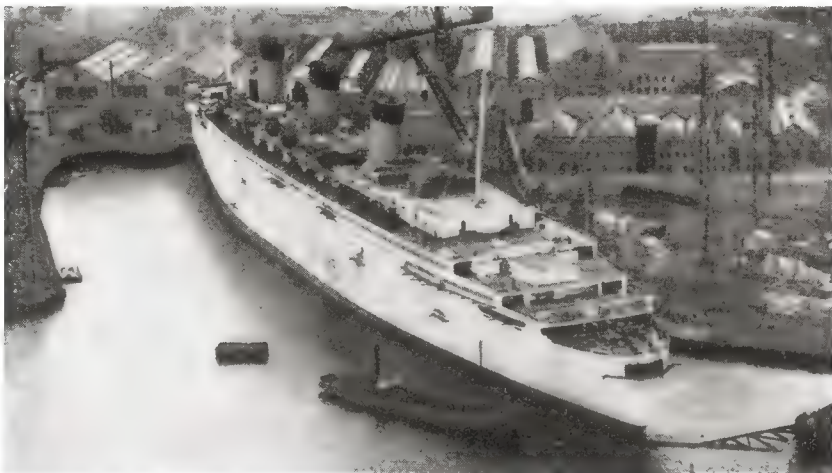


Photos: Central Press, Fox, Hoppé





**"Glasgow, grim, grey and enterprising, is proud of the fact that she dug the Clyde," and the Clyde can be justly proud of the "Queen Mary."**



song" about the undeniable dangers and discomforts of their work. Stoically they regard the old wooden props bending like bows and say timber always gives you a month's notice before it breaks.

Miner audiences are among the most responsive in the world. They read H. G. Wells and, with more interest, Ethel M. Dell and Edgar Wallace. They've plenty of imagination. They expect

things to happen, but they are surprised to hear a woman talking about adventure. If the new machinery has taken women "out of their proper place" in Lancashire, the mining towns keep them with their noses to the domestic grindstone. A few of the most modern collieries have pit-head baths, but generally the miners come home blackened, and it is the women's duty to prepare hot water

before the kitchen fire, to pull off the men's boots and generally behave like the wives of fighting men in the middle ages!

In Durham, the miners talked to me of the nationalisation not of wealth, but of time. One man suggested that the landowners who had fled before the advance of coal, should be obliged to return to their own districts and to spend for the benefit of the local inhabitants a proportion of their time and experience. "If there's to be any comradeship between classes," he said, "the rich must be taxed in work for the general community." And he regretted that the squires of his father's day had left the lands with which, for generations, their families had been connected. "My lads won't know what the gentry was," he concluded, using the past tense.

Cardiff is a vast city facing the ocean highways which unite us to the Dominions, but Cardiff thinks and dreams in terms of coal, for in the narrow mining valleys, the men can imagine no other goal but the pits. They are experts, demanding high wages for hard work. A few of the women, neat, anxious and pallid, said to me after hearing tales of far-away countries: "I'd like my boys to go there. I don't want them to live underground," but what can mothers do to stem the tide which for a century has driven husbands and sons into the pits?

For a lecturer, each town and each audience has its special qualities. Leeds to me means hard-headed metal-workers intent on such problems as steel sleepers for the tropics where timber rots. Nottingham is represented by a spider people, the geni of lace, who talk familiarly of Paris because of the rivalry between French and English designers. Leicester resolves itself into the smiling faces and trim heads of rows and rows of stocking girls attendant on the machines which turn out 1/11 hose or hundred gauge masterpieces, apparently with the same ease and absence of human effort.

Bristol means aircraft—a factory doubled in two months, offices and hangars growing, unemployment sinking out of sight, and the simpler luxury trades such as cigarettes and chocolates booming because the young men, making more and still more aeroplanes, can afford now to spend a little extra on their girls.

Southampton is a cosmopolis, with every language talked on her docks and strange sunburned men rising at the back of the hall to say: "I been there too, Miss. I seed that in—"

And London, too, has the quality of all peoples and all places, but none of her own, for she is at once imperial and provincial, a bustling housekeeper in black bombazine, concerned with prices, and Britannia in helmet and mail, spoiling for a fight. In London, I've had every chair in the balcony thrown at me by a political audience which could not think of any other way of signifying disagreement. And in London I've been carried the length of a street on women's shoulders because I'd had the luck to see and do the things of which they dreamed! Dear and difficult London, how delighted I am to leave you and to return to you!





GO hang yourself, you old M.D.!  
 You shall no longer sneer at me.  
 Pick up your hat and stethoscope,  
 Go wash your mouth with laundry soap;  
 I contemplate a joy exquisite  
 In never paying you for your visit.  
 I did not call you to be told  
 My malady is a common cold.

by  
 OGDEN  
 NASH

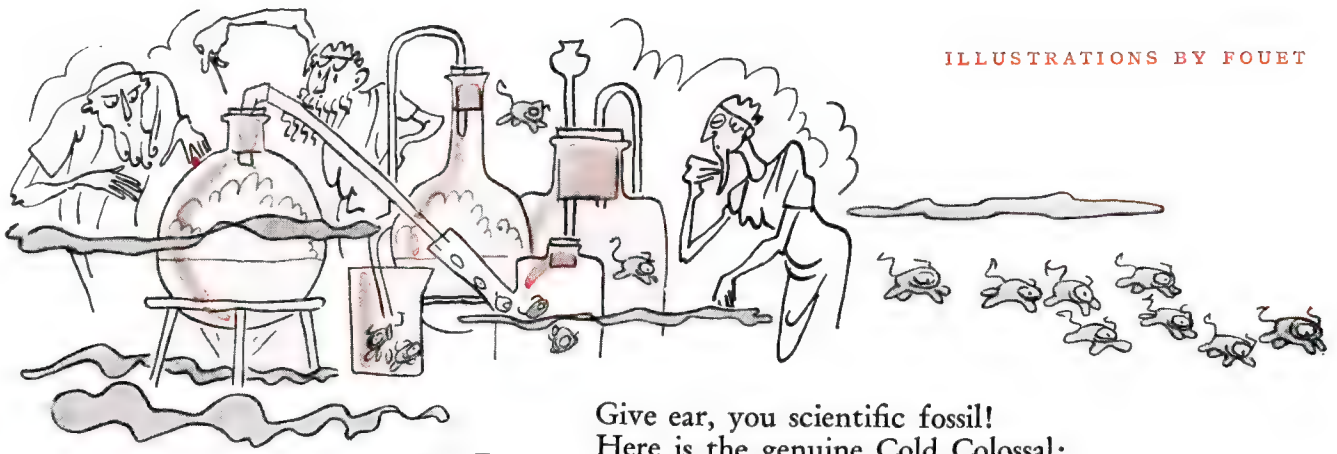


By pounding brow and swollen lip;  
 By fever's hot and scaly grip;  
 By these two red redundant eyes  
 That weep like woeful April skies;  
 By racking snuffles, snort, and sniff;  
 By handkerchief after handkerchief;  
 This cold you wave away as naught  
 Is the damndest cold man ever caught.

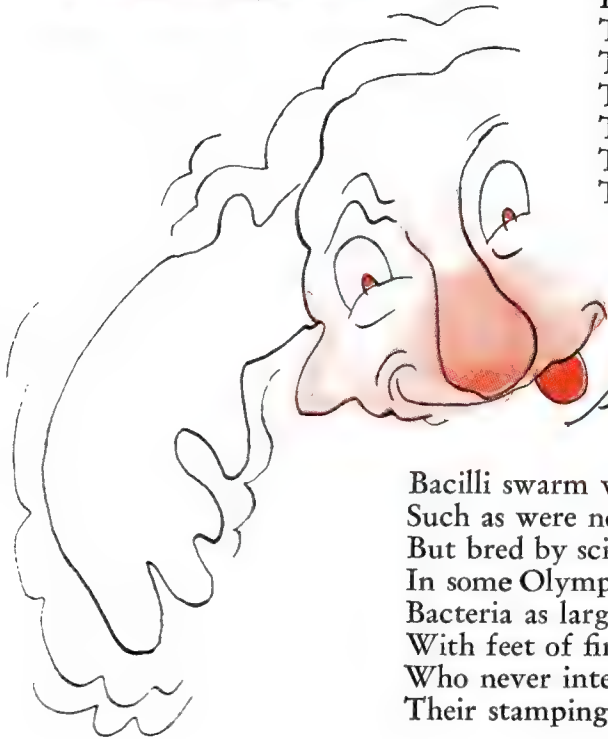
*Coughs and curses*



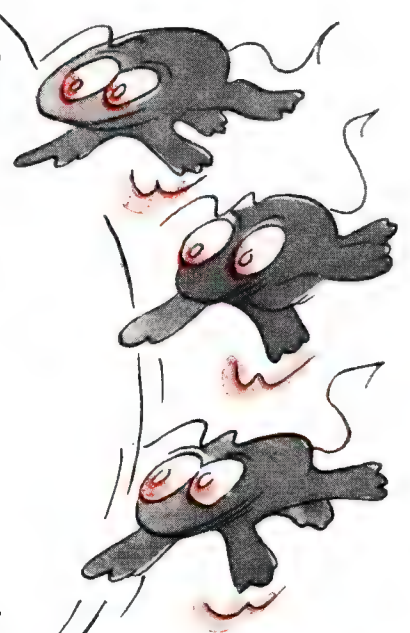




Give ear, you scientific fossil!  
Here is the genuine Cold Colossal;  
The Cold of which researchers dream,  
The Perfect Cold, the Cold Supreme.  
This honoured system humbly holds  
The Super-Cold to end all colds;  
The Cold Crusading for Democracy;  
The Führer of the Streptococracy.



Bacilli swarm within my portals  
Such as were ne'er conceived by mortals,  
But bred by scientists wise and hoary  
In some Olympian laboratory;  
Bacteria as large as mice,  
With feet of fire and heads of ice  
Who never interrupt for slumber  
Their stamping elephantine rhumba.



A *common* cold? Gadzooks, forsooth!  
Ah, yes. And Nero was somewhat uncouth;  
Don Juan was a common gallant,  
And Shakespeare's plays show signs of talent;  
The Arctic winter is rather coolish,  
And your diagnosis is fairly foolish.  
Oh, what a birdie history holds  
For the man who belittled the Cold of Colds!

*in feverish verses*





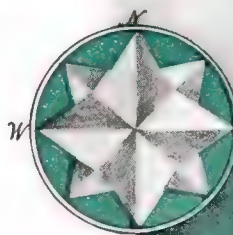
Sir Wilfred with  
his eldest son on  
board Strathcona II



## TO OUR QUESTION:

What interests you most in the  
world to-day?

Sir WILFRED GRENFELL  
replies



# The Joy of Doing Things

FOR me no pleasure in life compares with the joy of achievement, of the actual doing of things, whether with body, mind or spirit. It is a joy so irrespective of cost or reward that it is the *one valid explanation of*, and apology for, our brief stay on this planet. Of that joy the athlete has no monopoly. To the scholar, to the scientist, to the martyr, to every life which embodies the spirit of self-conquest, it affords the utter satisfaction of knowing that what you have to give is needed.

From youth onwards, my heroes have been most often physical athletes. So innate was this admiration that I have never been able to listen to a self-indulgent-looking person. My love for the Greek perfection of body almost reconciled me to struggling with a dead language. When I first left home for boarding school my father told me I must choose between football and music, as each had to be practised on the same afternoon. I chose football instantly and would do so again, though it has cost me the embarrassing penalty of being

caught napping at grand opera, and has landed me on the rocks when trying to lead the singing, of which our Labrador people are so fond!

Gaining a place in the team gave me more pleasure than winning a scholarship.

An invaluable rule for me has always been: when two courses are open, choose the more adventurous. So the emotions, faith, courage and love, are my truest guides, because of their capacity as compared with the limitations of a half-ounce of protoplasmic thinking machinery.

Such modern scientists as Eddington, Jeans, Bragg, Millikan, Einstein and Edison have become my "men of action," not chiefly because they gave us radio or motor-cars or telephones or wireless or countless mechanical aids to achievement, but because of their increasingly intellectual modesty, when the greatest of all human interests, *the reality of the spiritual*, is concerned. When they, "humble men of heart," teach that there is a spiritual Power outside ourselves, we can understand how a dozen unlearned



Sir Wilfred Grenfell with some  
children of his Labrador mission



# Labrador's famous missionary explains his choice among the values of life

men could "turn the world upside down."

It was because people interested me so intensely that I chose the medical profession, though I decided early that if life on this planet were only a brief tragedy there could be little point in trying to prolong it. When the doctor sees that medicine for the *physical* machinery is parallel to the Gospel for the *spiritual* machinery, then he finds his true *apologia pro vita sua*.

The aspect of medicine which attracts me most has always been the restoring to my patient of the ability to *do* things. A dope to relieve pain or a dole to mitigate poverty has never interested me half so deeply as enabling a man to earn his own living.

"What are you going to do about it?" has always been my most absorbing interest. Endless

failures in every department of life can be traced at long last to *lack of willingness to work*.

On one occasion I had removed the foot of an old lady, a Roman Catholic neighbour, for tuberculosis of the ankle. Artificial legs do not grow on Labrador bushes. The next time I was on a lecture tour in the United States I happened to be speaking in a Congregational church hall. I asked the audience if any of them had a leg he did not want. After the lecture a lady told me that she was a Methodist, but that her husband, who had been a Presbyterian, had died and left behind him a "perfectly good leg." When I, an Episcopalian, took that Presbyterian leg, given me by a Methodist in a Congregational church, back to Labrador and fitted it on my Roman Catholic friend, it enabled her to walk perfectly.

As I look back I find my interests all tarred with the international brush. The sea binds men and nations together. In science "every man hears in his own tongue the wonderful works of God." In medicine he who does not freely give his discovery for the benefit of the world is ethically anathema. My love for people early taught me that a different pigmentation of the skin from mine does not make my Eastern

or Ethiopian neighbour my inferior.

Control by force of arms, actuated as it so often is by greed, offers the world only misery, disillusion and chaos. Though generations of my forebears served in the army or the navy, war and its indiscriminate destruction in anger of selected lives holds for me only horror.

The schoolboy who when asked, "What is the meridian?" replied, "A menagerie lion running round the world," thereby gave an up-to-the-minute description of exclusive national lines. Fancy a good neighbour allowing himself to be cramped by arbitrary geographical boundaries. The Good Samaritan has always fascinated me. What fun he must have had!

**On the right: Sir Wilfred playing the Good Samaritan, a rôle that has always fascinated him. Below is a typical scene on board a fishing boat off the coast of Labrador.**



*Photos by courtesy of The Grenfell Association.*



At seventy-odd my gaze turns from the wake to the horizon of interests not yet opened up ahead. From what unexplored seas are those wider interests to come? In the Christmas story the gifts of the Magi symbolise the homage of the world. Years ago my little boy was asked to portray the coming of the Three Wise Men. He painted them on three full-rigged schooners entering the harbour of Bethlehem. No matter how boundless the ocean of our interests, *that* is the anchorage for us all.



# THE FOOL HATH

by

BEVERLEY NICHOLS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR WRAGG

**M**ESSIAH or Magician? This question is dramatic, but it is hardly as dramatic as the subject.

You and I are at a turning point in our lives. We have come a long way. When we started, we had little hopes of reaching our goal. Our very instincts rebelled against the thought of such a possibility. We were frightened, desperately in awe of the cruel regalia of the stars. We wanted to escape from the accusing finger of Eternity. But wherever we turned to escape we found mist, and veil after veil of Nothingness. Athwart the most distant veil there glimmered a sign which looked curiously like a cross. We began to walk towards it, certain that it would prove to be a mirage. But it did not prove to be a mirage. It became more and more solid. We are not yet in its shadow, but we can begin to discern the outlines of the figure that is stretched upon it.

And remember, we have got thus far by following the historical facts. We have consistently looked on the worst side of the picture. We have not abandoned ourselves to any mystical ecstasies. When we felt them approaching, we ran away. We sniffed no incense. We lit a cigarette. Perhaps our fingers were trembling. That doesn't matter. We lit it. We drank no heady wine of theology . . . we ordered another cocktail. We sought no cloisters . . . we went to the Riviera. And as I wrote that last sentence, I realised that unwittingly I had clumsily paraphrased, once again, Francis Thompson's immortal *Hound of Heaven*.

*I pleaded, outlaw-wise,  
By many a hearted casement, curtained  
red,  
Trellised with intertwining charities;  
(For, though I knew His love Who fol-  
lowed,  
Yet I was sore adread  
Lest, having Him, I must have naught  
beside).  
But, if one little casement parted wide,  
The gust of His approach would clash  
it to.  
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to  
pursue.*

And still we flee. We are determined to kick against the pricks until the last minute.

It is really very important that we should realise this. We are in the posi-

tion of men who are taking a cure with the positive conviction that it is going to do no good. There is nothing of the Lourdes mentality about us. And that is why it is so remarkable that, in spite of ourselves, we have been pushed, forced, impelled, guided, use what word you will, to the very foot of the cross.

The figure on the cross gradually becomes real to us. We lower our eyes.

We will not look, not yet. We have still to fumble with a lot of manuscripts, stare at a number of ancient documents through the microscope. Somehow we can't do that, so close to the cross. We feel a little uneasy.

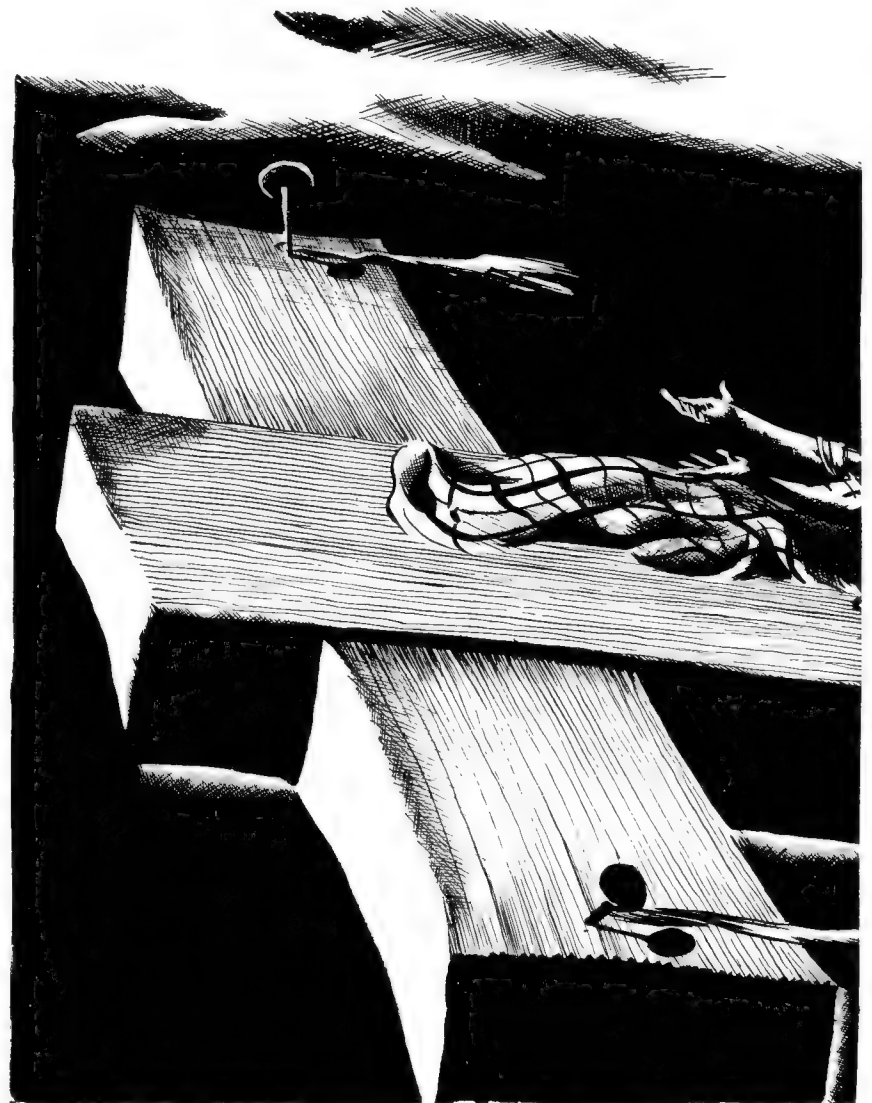
So let us retreat a little—once again into the shadows. Once again we are gentlemen of disbelief.

"The figure *may* be false," we mutter to ourselves. "We mustn't get absurd ideas into our heads. It may be only a pious Image."

An Image?

With that word "image" ringing in our ears, I would ask you to read with me a few sentences from a very wise book—*According to Saint John*, by Lord Charnwood:

"Great numbers of ordinary readers



*Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth*



# SAID...

have derived a knowledge of Jesus Christ mounting to what, though my own phrase jars on me a little, I can only call personal acquaintance. This sense of acquaintance with His person really far exceeds anything similar that we possess in regard to any other historical figure. In occasional moments of confidence two of us could discuss together what Jesus Christ would have said or done in any given circumstances. We should do so with a reality of interest, and what is more, with a prospect of fairly definite result, to which there is certainly no parallel."

"Don't listen to him," we mutter to ourselves. "Lord Charnwood is talking through his hat."

Is he?

Read on:

"If corroboration is wanted for the idea which we thus draw from the Gospels, corroboration is ready. In early writers so different as Clement of Rome, St. James, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Peter, the author of the Acts, and St. Paul, we find concordant testimony to what might loosely be called the Christian rule of conduct accepted *from the first*. The traits of this pattern are those of the *historic* Jesus. The pattern has this utterly singular feature: it is originally the type of a man with the intellect and temperament of genius, and with will and nerves of steel, engaged upon a strange, tremendous enterprise, *yet it is without hesitation taken home for personal use by people, whom differences of intelligence, temperament, circumstances, vocation, strength, race, age,*

*sex, would seem to place immeasurably far from Him.*"

"An Image?" we ask the Rationalist.

"Yes," he replies somewhat testily. "Based upon a man, of course, but absurdly touched up."

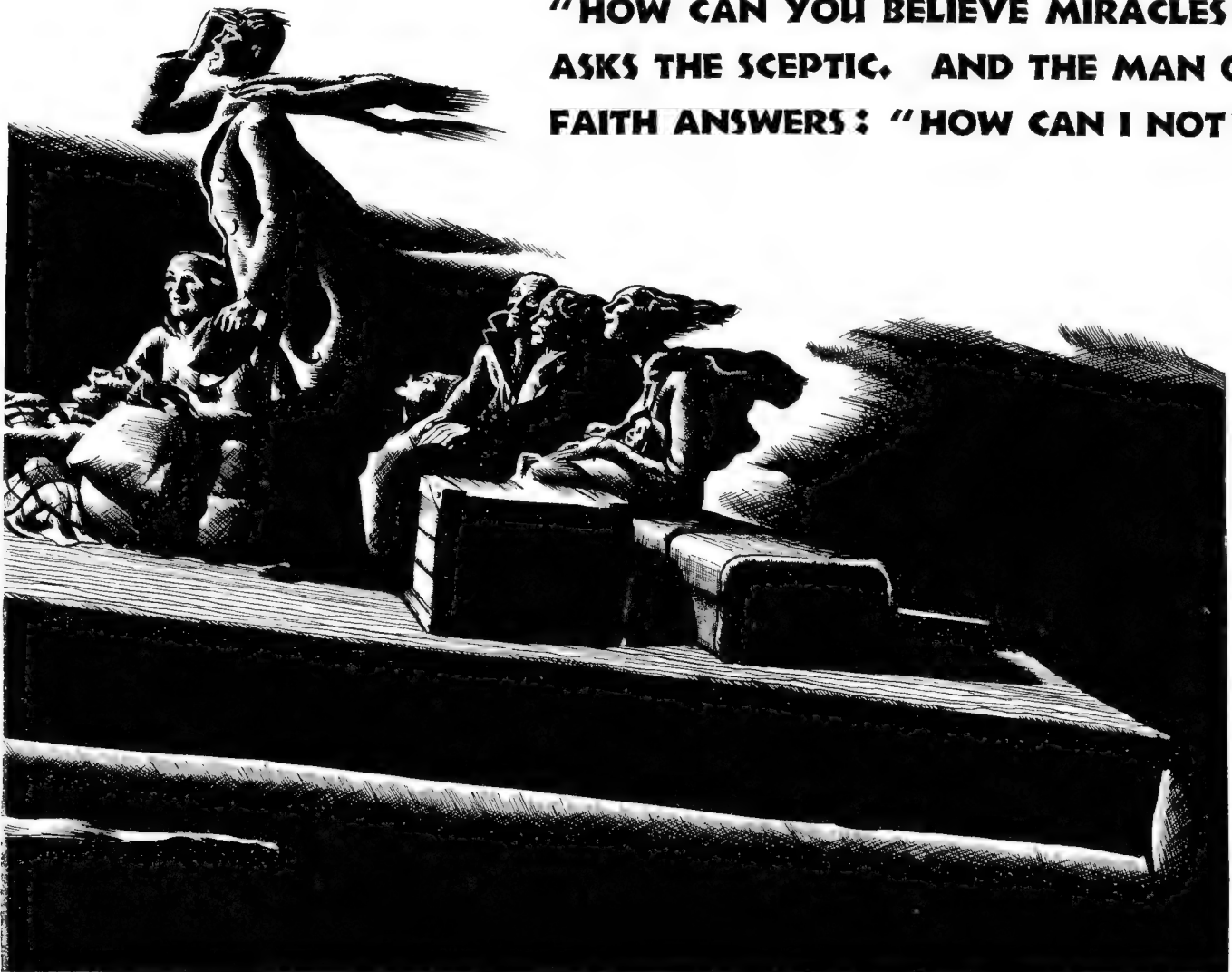
"Touched up? I see. You mean, he was just a man. He couldn't, for example, work a miracle?"

"Good God, no," grunts the Rationalist. "Look at the silly sort of miracles they said he *did* work. That ought to be enough for you!"

"All right. We'll look at them."

And so, once more, out with our microscopes. They look rather feeble, these little lenses, in the curious radiance which is gathering round us. Still, they are the best, the most powerful, the

**"HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE MIRACLES?"  
ASKS THE SCEPTIC. AND THE MAN OF  
FAITH ANSWERS: "HOW CAN I NOT?"**



them out of their distresses . . . so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.—Psalm cvii, 28, 30.



## The Fool Hath Said . . .

most modern microscopes, that we can buy. We level them over the gospel miracles.

We will begin by assuming that all the miracles are fakes.

We will glide gracefully over the reason why they are faked. We will ignore the somewhat potent questions which the men of faith might put to us, such as "*why* these monstrous lies? *Why* these fantastic and ingenious conceits? *Why* should uneducated peasants suddenly conceive such astonishing illusions, and why should they persist in these illusions to the point of death?"

We don't know why. We are gentlemen of disbelief, bless us. We are not concerned with motives. All we know is that miracles don't happen.

The miracles, therefore, are fakes.

How can we prove it?

Well, obviously, there is one way, which should make a particular appeal to the legally minded. We can endeavour to show proof of conspiracy, of illicit collaboration between the writers. It is hardly conceivable that a number of forgers, who were endeavouring to foist a colossal illusion upon the world, should not take the elementary precaution of seeing that their stories tallied. They were men, if we are to believe the critics, of astonishing acumen, boundless invention, and inexhaustible cunning. They had every opportunity to conspire. Even if they had not done so, the early Church could have "cooked" their stories for them. Let us examine the evidence of this conspiracy.

Consider the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. It is a very important miracle. If the account of it is faked we may be quite certain that all the stories will tally. There will be a smoothing out of any discrepancies. Well. . . .

According to Mark, Jairus, who was one of the rulers of the synagogue, came hurrying to Jesus, fell at his feet, and besought him saying, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death." And on the way to Jairus' house some people met them saying, "Thy daughter is dead. Why troublest thou the Master any further?"

According to Matthew, on the other hand, Jairus came to him, worshipped and said, "My daughter is *even now dead*: but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live."

And Luke differs once again. For he does not tell us whether Jairus said the daughter was dead or dying. He only says that he fell down at Jesus' feet and besought him to come to his house.

Conspiracy? Collaboration?

Well, no. Not exactly. We shall have to give up *that* argument. Of course you can say that this discrepancy disproves the truth of the whole story. But it is a very minor

discrepancy compared with the facts upon which all the stories are agreed, namely that the daughter *was* raised from the dead, and that when Jesus came into the house he said the quiet but stupendous words, "She is not dead, but sleepeth."

As gentlemen of disbelief we are therefore faced with a very awkward dilemma in the very first miracle we hit upon. (We chose it, by the way, because it is triumphantly cited by Professor Guignebert, the Solomon of the Sorbonne, to prove that all the miracles are a lot of hotchpotch.) The dilemma is that if the writers of the New Testament were forgers they were extremely clumsy and simple men to leave such an obvious hole in the fabric of their forgery. And yet, though they were so clumsy and simple they managed to invent a superb story, culminating in a dramatic climax with the words, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," words which have rung through the world ever since.

We hate to admit it, but the three stories, taken together, have a ring of truth more convincing than if they had all said exactly the same thing. Supposing three witnesses were telling the story of an accident in our own time.



**And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.—John viii, 32.**

A boy, we will say, has just been rescued from the river. The father runs to the doctor, crying to him to come and give artificial respiration. Smith might swear that the father said, "My boy's drowned." Jones might swear that the father said, "My boy's nearly drowned." Robinson might not be sure what the father said at all. *But*, if Smith, Jones, and Robinson had thrown the boy into the pond themselves, and had then gone to the doctor's to establish an alibi, you may be pretty certain that their stories would be the same to the smallest detail.

I have dealt with this miracle at a certain length because it is typical of many miracles in the New Testament. There *are* little discrepancies. As gentlemen of disbelief we are assuming that these discrepancies invalidate the miracles. But if we do that, we have to acquit the writers of any sort of conspiracy.

Well—the air is slightly cleared.

### II

The miracles are fakes. Of that we are assured.

All we have been forced to admit, so far, is that they are *honest* fakes, if you will forgive the lapse into Irish.

Now let us revert, once more, to the *a priori* method.

We assumed, firstly, that men inventing a miracle would see that the details tallied. The details didn't tally. So we gave up that line of approach.

We will now assume, secondly, that men inventing a miracle would very scrupulously avoid mentioning any persons who might deny the miracle. For we must remember that when the gospels were first given publicity the whole of the Holy Land abounded with persons who must have been eye-witnesses of the main incidents of Christ's career. True, these persons were getting on in years, but they were not so far gone that their memories were defunct nor their tongues paralysed. In other words, there was a very considerable body of *living* testimony with which the writers of the gospels had to contend.

We must therefore, as gentlemen of disbelief, expect that these miracles

which we are about to investigate will all be of an entirely vague and shadowy nature. We must take it for granted, that names, dates, places, will not be mentioned. The forgers may be unscrupulous, but they are not fools. If I say that once, in a dark lane, I encountered a ruffian of Herculean strength and knocked him flat with the palm of my hand, nobody can contradict me, though many might regret such an unwonted departure from my pacific protestations. But if I say that on April 1st 1935 I met Carnera opposite 195 Bond Street, and tossed him lightly through the door of the Embassy



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Club into the lap of Viscountess Castle-rosse that is, as they say, *autre chose*. Quite a number of people could politely differ from this statement, including Carnera himself.

Well, what do we find in the New Testament miracles?

To our disgust, we find that these wretched forgers who invented these tiresome stories are constantly putting in the most embarrassing circumstantial details. They really might have had more consideration for future generations of sceptics. Why, for instance, should they write fiction about Jairus, of all people? Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue. An important man. It is fairly safe to assume that he had dozens of garrulous relations. Why should the inventors of this miracle have mentioned him by name, knowing only too well that he could rise up and point a finger of indignation at them and say, "What is all this nonsense? My daughter was never ill. I never heard of Jesus Christ. How dare you spread these stories?"

And why, again, should they hit on the miracle of Malchus? He was a servant of the High Priest. Anybody could identify him. They said that his ear had been cut off and that Christ healed it. That is a very odd thing even to *think* about a man, let alone to write, if it never happened. The inventors of these stories must have had the most extraordinary minds. And why Lazarus, who was known to hundreds of people? And why, as we are facing up to the most stupendous lies of all, the feeding of the five thousand? This story was being calmly and concisely handed round, on slips of parchment, as a *fact*, to the general public. If it was a lie, or an invention, can any amount of credulity, Eastern mysticism, or any of the other explanations with which the higher critics entrench themselves against the thunders of God, explain the daring effrontery of the men who circulated that story? "All right—it's only twenty years ago—where *are* these five thousand? They can't all be dead." That is the first criticism that would greet the man who had invented that story.

No. They weren't all dead. That is an historical fact. And these stories *were* circulating. That is another historical fact. Where do those two historical facts lead us?

If we were *not* gentlemen of disbelief they might lead us to the fact that, at the very time that the first legend of this miracle was being handed round, on those pieces of parchment, there were still many men and women walking the dusty streets, whose bodies had once been nourished by a strange bread that was not as the bread of this world.

"But this is ridiculous," we exclaim. "Think of it *happening*. Don't go off into a lot of second-rate prose about 'strange bread.' *Think* of it happening. A Jew, in a long dusty robe, sitting on the grass, and breaking bread. Five loaves. And he goes on breaking bread. And one loaf springs out of another, and so on, and so on. It's too idiotic. Somebody invented it."

"Why?"

"I don't know. But a thing like that can't happen."

"Then why did they say it happened, at the top of their voices, when so many people could contradict them?"

"I tell you I don't know. But religious hysteria can be responsible for anything. It makes people feel comfortable."

"Does it make people feel comfortable to be crucified upside down?"

"What the devil . . ."

"That's what happened to Saint Peter. That was the reward for spreading stories like this. Why then did they spread them?"

"Oh, go away. You make me tired."

That fragment of dialogue, between a man of faith and a gentleman of disbelief, is not without reality. And since it illuminated the main thesis of the gentleman of disbelief, which may be described as "I don't believe in miracles, even if I see them," I would like to give my flimsy arguments a momentary weight by calling the evidence of Sir Oliver Lodge on the whole question of miracles in general. He is answering a gentleman called Professor Tyndall, who observed: "Science asserts that no prayers avail to call showers from heaven or deflect towards us a single beam of the sun, without a disturbance of natural law of a very serious nature."

Sir Oliver replies: "The assertion is that any act, if achieved *by the actual volition* of the Eternal, would be a miracle."

He continues: "The implied *dogma* is that the special volition of the Eternal cannot, or at any rate does not, accomplish anything whatever in the physical world."

Sir Oliver, after pointing out that this dogma is not a deduction from any of the known principles of physical science, observes, "The alleged unscientific character of prayer for rain depends really not upon its conflict with any known physical law, since it need involve no greater interference with the order of nature than is implied in a request to a gardener to water the garden. Nor does it really depend upon the impossibility of causing rain to fall when otherwise it would not. It depends upon the disbelief of 'science' in *any power who can and will attend and act*."

I have quoted this passage in order to refute the many loose-thinking persons who blandly state that a miracle is an interference with the laws of nature. It is only an interference with the laws of nature if you believe that the Universe is a blind machine, started by Nobody, attended by Nobody, interested in Nobody, a machine, none the less, with incredibly complicated laws (drawn up by Nobody), and a machine which, though it is a mass manufacturer of souls does not possess a Soul itself, because it is Nobody.

And if you believe that, you will believe anything.

However, we are getting on too fast. We must hurry back to our sceptics' teaparty.

The miracles are fakes. Nothing will budge us from that conviction. All that we will admit is that firstly, they are "honest" fakes, because we found very definite evidence that the writers did not conspire together, and secondly that they are very *daring* fakes, because the writers kept on mentioning persons and places. We feel rather annoyed by the fact that we are unable to produce a scrap of historical evidence to show that a single person contradicted any of these wild lies. We can only assume that the lies were so far-fetched that nobody bothered.

However, as we continue the examination of these pious forgeries, our amazement at the ingenuity of the forgers increases. If they had been writing with the one object of confounding us poor Rationalists, they could not have done it better. For not only is it astonishing that they were able to invent such stories, but it is even more astonishing that they were able to *refrain*

from inventing other stories.

Do you know the Christ of the Apocrypha? Most people don't. He is a very miraculous person indeed. Far more miraculous than the Christ we know. He is, of course, entirely the product of pious early Christians, whose minds were so inflamed by the legend of the true Christ that they wove round him haloes of their own invention . . . haloes which became him not at all.

The Apocrypha is fiction. And listen to the sort of fiction it is! I will give two extracts, both of them from the spurious Gospel of Thomas, which is supposed to give the story of Christ's childhood.

"The little child Jesus, when he was five years old, was playing at the ford of a brook. And having made soft clay he fashioned thereof twelve sparrows. And it was the Sabbath-day when he did these things. And Joseph came to the place and cried out to him saying, Wherefore doest thou these things on the Sabbath which it is not lawful to do? But Jesus clapped his hands together and cried out to the sparrows and said to them 'Go!' and the sparrows took their flight and went away chirping."

This is certainly a remarkable performance. Mr. Maskelyne could not better it. Moreover, it is a completely pointless performance. It does nobody any good. It illustrates no moral. It is only a rather tiresome exhibition of a small boy "showing off."

Therefore, as Rationalists, we are compelled to exclaim, "How very clever of the men who invented the Gospel miracles to avoid mentioning such miracles as that! And what real genius these unscrupulous forgers manifested in the story they *did* make up about Christ and the Sabbath."

Do you remember that story? Christ had entered the synagogue on a Sabbath. There was a man there who had a withered hand. The Pharisees watched, to see if he would heal the man, so that they might accuse him of breaking the Sabbath.

"And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."

Marvellous apostles! Not only do they invent a superb lie but they attach to that lie (and to every other miracle) an equally superb system of ethics! Marvellous apostles! They were so cunning, so far-seeing, that they made Christ work his miracles *only* in order to point a moral and illustrate His teaching. How very much cleverer they were than the silly people who wrote the Apocrypha! Which reminds me that there is one other little extract from the spurious Gospel of Thomas which we should consider:

"Jesus went through the village, and a child ran and dashed against his shoulder. And Jesus was provoked and said unto him, Thou shalt not finish thy course. And immediately the child fell down and died."

Can you imagine, for a single instant, Christ performing a miracle like that? No, you can't. Why not? The man of Faith *might* answer, "Because Christ was a real person and because we know that the truth about His life is told in the New Testament and nowhere else." The



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Rationalist must answer, "Because the men who invented the miracles were exceptionally clever. They would not allow any discrepancies of that nature . . . any flaws."

To which the man of Faith retorts, "But we've already seen that they *did* allow discrepancies and flaws. You can't have it both ways."

And the Rationalist snaps, "You make me tired. And anyway, you were silly to quote the Apocrypha, even though you agree that it is a forgery. Because it's an example of the absurd way in which the fantastic legends spring up about any prophet. And I'd bet you anything you like that if you took the gospels in the order in which they were written you'd find that the last gospel had a great many more miracles added to it than the first."

"How much did you say you'd bet?"  
"Well . . . what are you getting at?"

"How much?"  
"I thought this was a religious discussion," sniffs the Rationalist.

It is a religious discussion. And the Rationalist has put his foot into it rather badly.

He is quite right in saying that, since we know the miracles to be fakes, we should be justified in assuming that the stories would grow more and more elaborate with each gospel, that the miracles would become more and more numerous.

Unfortunately for the Rationalist however, exactly the opposite is the case. The greatest number of miracles, per page, occurs in the first gospel of all, which is the Gospel according to Saint Mark. And there is another thing which, as detectives, cannot fail to excite us, however much we may regret it, as gentlemen of disbelief. Namely, that this first Gospel of Saint Mark is the only gospel which admits that *there were occasions on which Christ could not do any miracles at all!* The other apostles, presumably, refrained from such an admission because they thought it would be dangerous, in view of the storms which were threatening the early Church.

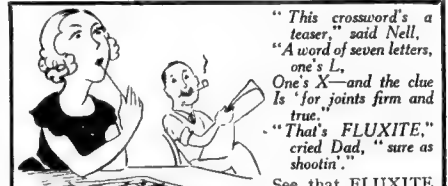
Incredibly subtle Saint Mark! Not only did he forge and concoct the most weird legends, but in order to make these legends more convincing, he puts in a passage to say that Christ could not *always* do as he wished . . . he was only human after all. And not only does he hit upon this brilliant invention, but he prefaces it with one of the best epigrams of ancient or modern times (all out of his own simple head). He invents the epigram, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country." And then he adds, "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk."

And now we must really admit that as gentlemen of disbelief we are finding our rationalism demands of us almost as much credulity as the Christian's faith. How are we to continue our assumption that all these miracles and these subtleties and these devices came out of the head of a simple peasant? Well, we *do* believe it. Miracles don't happen, we know that. All the same, we are bound to admit a grudging praise to this man Mark, merely because he was such a superb literary artist.

Think of this story, then, in terms of literature alone.

"He could there do no mighty work. . . ."

Christ snubbed, Christ trying and failing . . . yes, Christ *failing* . . . does not this admission make the story of the



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other miracles even more remarkable? If Mark had left out that part of the story, if he had told a story of unbroken triumph and unflagging power, the story would be infinitely the poorer.

It needs only a little imagination to conjure up for ourselves a picture of sick who were brought to him and sent away as bad as they came, of women who were *not* healed, of devils who were not cast out, but raged before him triumphantly, while the wretched men whom they tormented cried and spat and blasphemed, dancing before him with obscene gestures in the Eastern sunlight, while he stared at them with wide, sorrowful eyes, unable to help them.

### III

All this is very unsatisfactory.

For though we know the miracles are fakes, we are being gradually driven into the singular position that in order to prove the falsity of one miracle we have to believe in another. In order to prove that Christ's miracles did *not* happen we have to prove that another very definite miracle did happen . . . the miracle of the stories themselves.

I will make this point absolutely clear, not by reiterating the remarkable cumulative evidence which we have already collected, but by asking you to consider only one of Christ's miracles. The case of the woman who was healed of an issue of blood.

I will preface this case by a few questions to a Rationalist.

Question. You agree that the gospels were written in the first century A.D.?

Answer. Well . . .

Question. It doesn't matter. Say that they were written somewhere in the first *five* centuries A.D., if you like. Will you grant us *that*?

Answer. Of course.

Question. If we can produce from these documents a story which anticipates medical science by over a thousand years. . . .

Answer. What do you mean? "Anticipates medical science?" Some vague hotchpotch about the soul's effect on the body?

Question. No. Nothing at all vague. A concise description of a physical function which was completely unrecognised by medical science even in the eighteenth century.

Answer. In the New Testament?

Question. Certainly. And not particularly emphasised, either. Thrown in quite casually.

Answer. You can't produce it.

Can't we? All right. Read this!

We hand him the Bible. He reads. Will you read too? It is the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Mark. And as we are detectives, I would ask you to pay particular attention to detail.

"And much people followed him and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned about in the press and said, Who touched my clothes?"

That is the story. And in order to

appreciate to the full the point I am about to put to you I would ask you to say to yourself, *aloud*, those last few words "*. . . knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned and said, Who touched my clothes?*" You have said them aloud? Thank you. One more request. Would you just remember, for a moment, the Apocalypse miracles about Jesus as a child, striking another child dead because he collided with him? Thank you. I am sorry to make you work so hard, but we are both after the same thing, and if we can believe in one miracle, we can believe in all.

We are now ready to comment on this story.

And this is what we are forced to observe. The story was written fifteen hundred years before Paracelsus laid the foundations of modern medicine. It was written sixteen hundred years before Harvey discovered the true circulation of the blood. Nearly eighteen hundred years after it was written Fritz Antoine Mesmer was expelled from the most enlightened capital of Europe for suggesting that there was a strange healing "fluid" which, in certain circumstances, flowed from one human being to another. And nineteen hundred years afterwards, a medium was put on a pair of scales in Paris, and weighed during a trance, in order that it might be proved (as it was), that during this state she lost, in "ectoplasm," as much as fourteen pounds in weight.

And yet, all these fragments of petty knowledge, are implicit in the simple story of this woman. "Some virtue" went out of Jesus. He felt it, physically, in His bones and in His blood. It was quite different from the jostling of the crowd on all sides. It was some tremendous attraction, drawing "virtue" out of his body, through his clothes, into another body. To-day, we would be inclined to grant that in a very minor degree and in very special circumstances, similar phenomena may be possible. But in those days, any such theories would have been regarded as simply crazy. It would have been utterly beyond the powers of the most brilliant sages, philosophers and doctors to *invent* such a story. It would have been as easy for them as to invent a complete description of a Zeppelin. And yet, the man who, according to the doubters, "invented" it, was not a sage nor a philosopher nor a doctor, but a fisherman . . . a man who, in general knowledge, would have been completely floored by a modern slum-child of six years old.

### IV

We are beginning to feel desperate.

We are gentlemen of disbelief, but at the same time we would like to get out of this argument. Unfortunately there is only one exit, and over that exit is written in large letters, *FAITH*. But we can't have faith. It's . . . it's silly, it's "not done." It's unscientific.

In despair we turn to the higher critics. Can't they do anything for us? Can't they switch the limelight on to some part of the story which proves it, beyond a shadow of a doubt, to be false?

The answer, unfortunately, is no. For the higher critics are really in just as uncomfortable a position as we are. As every year goes by they are being made to look more ridiculous. Why, even when they push their noses into the *Old Testament*, which you would have thought a good deal more vulnerable than the New, they have to draw them

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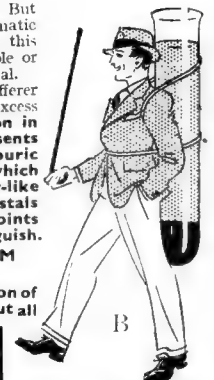
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out again with a sharp cry of disgust, and all the libraries echo with their sneezing.

This may be irrelevant, but I can't help quoting here, with a certain malevolent delight, the discomfort of that pillar of superior wisdom, the Rev. Samuel Holmes. The Reverend Samuel was an important contributor to Peake's *Commentary on the Bible*. He knew all about Joshua, at least he thought he did. Elevating his nose in the air, and taking an antiseptic pen between his fingers he wrote, "If this reconstruction of the history of the Conquest is approximately true, the narratives of one book are simply an unscientific endeavour to account for certain historical facts known to the writers. The last twelve chapters of the book are generally admitted to have little if any historical value. According to critical investigation the book appears to be a medley of contradictory narratives, most of which are unhistorical."

After which acidities it may be safely presumed that poor Joshua retired behind his beard in dudgeon. (I like the word "dudgeon," which always makes me think of rather tough fish.)

The reader must excuse these flippancies, because I am feeling light-hearted. Not through any personal perversity but because Joshua, after all, is not in such a deep hole as the higher critics have endeavoured to throw him. And strangely enough the people who got him out of the hole are the people who dig holes, not with their pens, but with their spades, the archaeologists.

Professor John Garstang was for seven years director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. He was also director of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine. He was constantly on the spot while all the historical sites over which so much higher critical scorn has been poured. The historical sites of Joshua and Judges: Jericho, Ai, and Hazor. He says: "I was deeply impressed with a sense of material reality underlying the historical narrative of Joshua and Judges. No radical flaw was found at all in any of the topography and archaeology of these documents."

Professor Garstang—(with his despised spade)—also ended "the difficulties of chronology which have long perplexed students. I found that not only were these records founded upon fact, but they must have been derived from earlier writings, almost contemporary with the events described, so detailed and reliable was the information."

And yet the Reverend Higher Critic Samuel Holmes calmly stated, *before* these excavations, that most of the chapters were written 800 years later than Joshua!

"Irrelevant," sniffs the Rationalist. "I beg your pardon. It is not at all irrelevant."

"We were talking about miracles." "Quite. But we were also talking about the higher criticism, a subject which *you* introduced. And this example of higher criticism is typical. Higher criticism gets higher and higher, but it always explodes in the end."

"Not over the New Testament." "On the contrary. The higher critics have far worse luck with the New Testament than with the Old. I chose the Old Testament because I wanted to be scrupulously fair, and because it is far more vulnerable. And in spite of that, it is being vindicated more and more clearly every day."

And indeed, this is literally true. The spade confounds the pen. The

*The Fool Hath Said . . .*

man of action throws mud in the face of the man of letters. And all the ink of learning runs dry in the sands where the secrets of the Bible are hidden. They are magic sands. For many years the wind blows over them, while the scholar writes. And then, there is a storm, and in the morning, on the sands, something is shining. It is a text, glistening, golden, as fresh as on the day the prophet minted it. And the poor scholar has to rub the dust from his eyes, go back to his study, and start all over again.

V

"Science! Science! To our rescue!" So might we gasp, in our last despairing efforts to preserve our dignity, as gentlemen of disbelief.

But Science, alas, can no longer hasten to the aid of those who stone the prophets. She herself is too enmeshed in the snares of a magic she does not understand. It is all round her, flickering from a thousand test tubes, dazzling her, bewildering her, filling her hair with sparks and her veins with a strange fire.

Science is dancing dizzily towards . . . what?

Well, wherever she may be dancing, she is not dancing away from the idea of a miraculous interpretation of life.

And whatever she is proving, she is proving one immense and eternally irrefutable fact, which is that man knows Nothing, without the help of Something. The man of faith calls that Something . . . God.

Is the man of faith a fool? Of course he is a fool. Aren't we all? But he is not such a fool as the man of doubt, because he knows his own folly.

Every scholar wears a clown's cap. That is what Science is proving. Through the rhythm of the most learned discourses we hear the echo of the Jester's bells. That is what Science is proving. And every Q.E.D. ends in Q.U.I.

Miracles.

They don't happen.

Very well. It is A.D. 1935. Before you is a black box. You paid ten guineas for it. You open it and turn a knob. And suddenly the room is filled with a woman's voice. You don't like the voice. You turn off the wireless.

Silence.

Silence, you say? Silence? *Why, the music is still going on!*

No, it isn't. We've turned off the machine.

What has that got to do with it? *The music is still going on.*

We need not continue the argument, which is indeed childishly obvious. And yet, I think that most of us are inclined to forget, when we turn on the wireless, that it is *not* the machine which causes the music. The machine is merely an ear . . . an intermediary. Of itself the machine is incapable of uttering a single squeak. It is a dumb, silent structure of wood and metal. It can only echo what it hears.

We forget this. We feel, in a way, that the wireless is like a gramophone . . . that it is doing something of its own accord. It is merely repeating a lesson.

This, when you really grasp it, is an awful thought. For this silence . . . this blankness, emptiness, which surrounds us in our quiet room, is a tempest of melody. The air is drenched with music, dizzy with song. The ether is a wild medley of voices, laughing,





**LYSTAV** makes its first appearance in the charming frock illustrated. This new and beautiful fabric tailors as well as linen, is supple as silk. Thanks to a patented process it resists and recovers from creasing. Wash it as wool and it keeps this crease-resistance. Lystav costs only 1/11 a yard, although in designs and colourings, as well as in feel and appearance, it suggests a much higher price. 35/36 inches wide, printed or plain. The frock in the photograph costs 21/-. It is CHESRO Model C211 and may be had in four standard sizes. Outsizes extra. All CHESRO ready-to-wear frocks carry the Tootal fabric guarantee. Overleaf is another model from the same range in Tootal Linen, and below it we print a list of some of the fabrics in which CHESRO frocks are made. Each frock has a CHESRO label.

*THE TOOTAL GUARANTEE:-*

*"Should dissatisfaction arise through any defect whatsoever in the material, Tootals will replace it or refund the price and pay the cost incurred in making up."*

**LYSTAV**





**LYSTAV**

AN ENTIRELY NEW FABRIC—

AND

**TOOTAL  
LINEN**

IN A PRINTED STYLE



*To Overseas Readers : Please note that although Tootal Fabrics are obtainable all over the world, any particulars given here regarding prices or ready-made frocks apply only to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.*

**T**OOTAL LINEN, in one of the many charming printed styles, is used for this delightful frock. It is a beautiful dress linen, with all the tailoring qualities for which linen is famous, and a crease-resisting power similar to that of wool. It keeps clean much longer than ordinary linen. When it does need washing, simply wash as wool, iron while damp, and it stays crease-resisting. Plain shades and prints, 3/6 a yard, 35/36 inches wide. Other qualities suitable for coats and suits.

**READY-TO-WEAR FROCKS.** The frock shown is CHESRO model C154, 25/11 in four standard sizes. The CHESRO Collection of ready-to-wear frocks includes models for every occasion, notable for their cut and finish, and for the lovely Tootal fabrics used. Every frock carries the Tootal fabric guarantee, and is identified in the shops by the sewn-in CHESRO label. Write Tootals, as below, for a booklet of selected CHESRO Models.



FABRICS IN THE TOOTAL CREASE-RESISTING RANGE INCLUDE :—

**ROBIA** Semi-transparent cotton in wide range of novel woven effects, raised spots and prints

**NORBAR** Crease-resisting cotton print

**LUXORA** New style cotton—looks like peasant linen

**TOOTRESS** Smooth, foulard-type rayon and cotton fabric

**TOOTAL TAFFETA** Printed rayon taffeta

**TOOTAL CHIFFON** Printed rayon chiffon

**TOOTAL GEORGETTE** Printed rayon georgette

**TOOTAMA** True crepe-de-chine weave, rayon and cotton

**LOVA** Soft rayon and cotton fabric, resembling light-weight wool

**TOOTAL LINEN** A pure dress linen that resists creasing

**LYSTAV** New rayon fabric. Tailors like linen. Supple as silk

All named on selvedge





crying, sobbing, entreating. *Is, I said.* Not "would be, if we turned on the wireless." It is, whether we turn on the wireless or not. Schubert is in the room, and Mozart, and Beethoven, and the song of the nightingale, and all the music of this earth. And voices pleading, and voices angry, and voices that whisper, and are sad. And we sit there, wrapped in silence.

# VI

Now let us see, for a moment, where we have arrived.

We inhabit a world which is unique in space.

The maker of that world, whom we call God, is presumably kindly disposed to us. (I dealt with that point in the first instalment and will say a few more words about it in a moment.)

Man has only just arrived on this world (in comparison with the immense ages in which the world was being prepared for him). And if God were to speak to him, instead of leaving him in a bewildering silence, God would choose to speak at about the time in which the Christian says He did speak.

In order to emphasise His words it is fairly obvious that He would accompany them by certain signs of a very remarkable nature.

And that brought us to the miracles.

Now what did we find about these miracles?

Firstly, we found that the men who ask us to believe them did not conspire together.

Secondly, that the miracles are not vague but extremely explicit, and are told of many men, some of them important, who could have contradicted them, but did not do so.

Thirdly, that the men who told them had every reason for *not* telling them, for keeping silent about them, since their only reward for speaking was persecution.

Fourthly, that the miracles are totally unlike anything that has occurred in the world before or since. We proved this by referring to the miracles of the Apocrypha, which were invented.

Fifthly, that if the miracles were forged, the men who forged them were not only great literary artists but were animated by the purest and most God-like thoughts, since almost every miracle is a pendant to a moral. Christ heals. Men marvel and gather round. Christ speaks. That is the almost invariable procedure.

Sixthly, that instead of the miracles increasing with time, as we should assume they would do, if their source was Fiction and not Fact, the *first* gospel tells of more miracles than any of the other gospels, and that these miracles have *not* been added to. Which leads to the assumption that even if men *tried* to invent a Christian miracle, they could not.

And that, by the way, is rather an interesting little thought. I do not believe the greatest imaginative genius of to-day could forge a single story about Christ which would not sound hollow beside the immensity of His words.

Seventhly, that unlike every other God made by man Christ sometimes *failed* to work miracles, which sounds as if the men who were writing about Him were writing *history*. And it also fits in with the legend that God came to earth as a man, with human failings.

Eighthly, that there are certain miracles, such as that of the woman with the issue of blood, which give an

account of a psycho-therapeutic event which could not conceivably have been understood by the man who wrote it. We decided, and rightly, that the discovery of these words in these ancient documents were as remarkable as would be the discovery of a detailed description of a modern aeroplane.

Ninthly and somewhat irrelevantly, we paused to observe that the Higher Critics, who are the chief enemies of belief in the miracles, are being continually confounded . . . that the vogue of a Higher Critic is rather less protracted than that of a film-star, and considerably less useful.

Tenthly, and still more irrelevantly, we turned on the wireless, just in order to show what clods we are. We *thought* we had ears. We haven't. The proof of that is that you, who are reading this, are sitting in the middle of a tempest of melody and discord. And we can't hear it.

I want to add an eleventhly, and then I want to say a lot of things which are very mixed up in my head, and will probably look rather foolish on paper.

The "eleventhly" is really quite simple, but you may not ever have noticed it.

It arises from the little synopsis to which I have so frequently referred you . . . the unique world, the voice of God speaking.

Have you ever realised one very strange and almost terrifying thing about Christ's words?

Have you ever noticed that he speaks . . . *like God*?

All the other little prophets *apologised* to the Almighty, rent their garments, sought advice. All the other little gods were only too aware of their failings. But Christ, whom even the sceptics admit to be a perfect character, had none of this humility. It never seems to have occurred to him. He spoke as one having illimitable authority. He spoke, in fact, as God would speak.

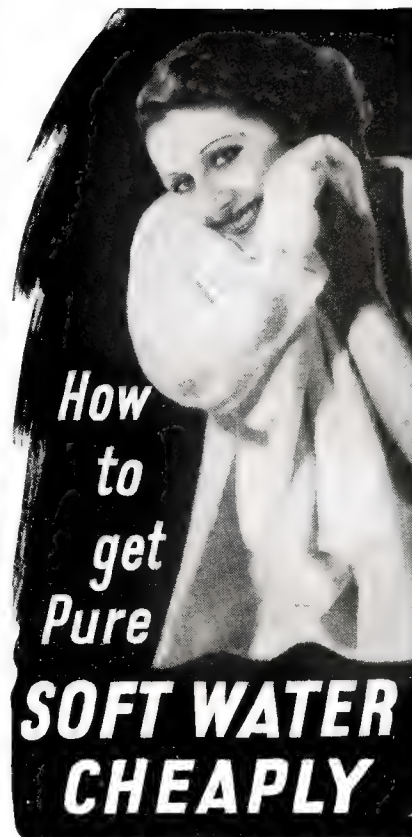
Listen.

Here is Elijah. A great prophet of the Old Testament. He is staying in the widow's house. Her son falls sick, is on the point of death.

"And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah."

And now, compare the action of Christ in similar circumstances. The story, by the way, is told us by Luke, who was a physician. It is also told in considerable detail. The date, the circumstances, the dramatis personæ, and the name of the city, Nain, are all given.

"Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us, and, That God hath visited his people."

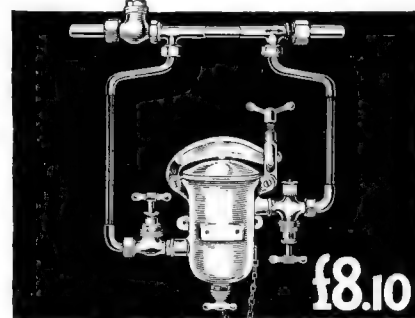


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"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise."

The words are unique. No prophet before or since has equalled that assurance. If Luke was inventing that story he was inventing something utterly without precedent. He was also inventing something against his own interest. He was also inventing with incredible rashness, in view of the fact that he mentioned names and dates within the living memory of the persons concerned.

We come, then, to this.

The miracles of the New Testament are completely and eternally inexplicable to us as gentlemen of disbelief.

If they are fakes, nothing fits in. No theory is applicable. We suggest an explanation, and in the next breath we have to contradict it. None of the tangled mysteries of history offers a fraction of the difficulties in which these miracles abound.

On the other hand . . .

If they are genuine, everything fits in. History falls into its place. Hitherto inexplicable actions become as clear as daylight. Meaningless discourses become highly significant. And a dark cloud of lies resolves, quite suddenly, into a single shining truth.

This is a *jact*. It is not an opinion, or a vague assertion, but a fact.

We have therefore arrived at the position of an atheist who is doing a crossword puzzle, in which one of the words is god. If he will only write down that word the uprights and the horizontals fall into place automatically. Everything fits in. The puzzle is solved. The prize is won. But unfortunately, he is an atheist, and there is no such word in his vocabulary. And therefore he has to cross out the "precious metal" in four letters, beginning with g, which ought to be "gold," and the interjection in two letters which is obviously "Oh!" and the "evil spirit" in five letters which is obviously "Devil," and sit there twiddling his thumbs, because he will not admit that the "Ruling Spirit of the Universe," in three letters, beginning with G is God. If it were in four letters he might make it *GOAT*, which would fit in most admirably with his philosophy. But unfortunately it's only in three. A damnable Trinity, tripping him up.

### VII

And now, it seems, we are in very sight of the Treasure but our limbs are paralysed. Our brains, those foolish little grey jellies which are always giving us mental indigestion, are holding us back.

This is an absurd situation. For, all through the Treasure hunt, we have been following the direction of those brains. We have said, "All right, *you* take charge." And the grey jellies have directed us, automatically, to the Treasure.

But then, the grey jellies stiffened. "There is something here which we do not understand," they seem to say. "This is all highly irregular . . . monstrous. We admit that there appears to be a Treasure over there. We can't find any flaws in it, even under the strongest microscope. But we *know* that there isn't such a thing."

We have come to the most critical moment in this book, and perhaps in our lives. For it is now that we have to make the supreme test of forgetting our brains and following our spirits.

It is very like jumping off a cliff. Here, under our feet is the solid land. Behind us are the things we know and cherish, the kindly lights of a village

street at dusk, trees with their sturdy roots thrust under the green fields, a cool river flowing, the echo of music and men's voices. Before us, space, and a Voice. We are told that somewhere in that space is happiness, waiting for us, and an eternal strength, stored up for us, and peace.

We sway there, on the cliff. The little grey jellies that are our brains shiver with apprehension, crying, "No, No. You will dash yourself to destruction. You will lose everything."

The Voice says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

"Madness, madness," scream the little grey jellies. "You are flesh and blood . . . nothing else . . . you are a decaying husk of matter, go back, go back to the street and make the best of your little hour."

The Voice says, "Be still, and know that I am God."

We press our hands to our ears. We shut our eyes. The conflict of the two voices is tearing us, rending our spirits. We aren't strong enough for such torments. We want help. We cry out for succour. And we cry to God.

And so it comes. That is the miracle, the ultimate miracle for which we have been seeking.

It is so tremendous that it is indescribable. It is so triumphant that at first the Rationalist, who for years has been tortured by the sense of his own importance, may not quite realise what has happened. He is like a man in a quarry where a great piece of rock has suddenly been blasted away. He is nearly blinded and deafened by the explosion. But gradually, as he opens his eyes, he sees a fair landscape that stretches before him, and as he takes his hands from his ears, he can hear the birds singing.

I am unworthy to write of this mystical experience. I only ask you to believe that it is true.

When we have pulled ourselves together, I will try to be more practical, and suggest a very few simple directions that you may follow as you stand on this cliff of doubt—a silly sentence, but I don't feel able to search my grey jelly of a brain for the right phrase just now. I feel too happy. I want you to share that happiness with me.

How funny this all is! We started this instalment with a microscope, and it seems to be ending in music. We began by treating miracles as "phenomena" . . . (and it is worth while to note that a "phenomenon" is only a piece of grit which the little grey jelly cannot absorb) . . . and we end by treating them as our birthright. For now, you and I are aware that every moment of this strange and lovely life, from dawn to dusk, is a miracle. Somewhere, always, a rose is opening its petals to the dawn. Somewhere, always, a flower is fading in the dusk. The incense that rises with the sun and the scents that die in the dark are all gathered up, sooner or later, into the solitary fragrance that is God. Faintly, elusively, that fragrance lingers over all of us. Sometimes we may not sense it. In noisy streets, in clamorous cities, the dust of the modern world may assail us, till we are breathless, panting for the sweet airs that drift from the little hill where once He cried. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But always, there is that strange haunting perfume . . . the savour of true virtue . . . that is like violets in a twilight lane, and music, when soft voices die.

Pray God that the ghost of it may have drifted, even for a moment, over these poor pages.



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V132

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## Honourable Mention

**A**MONG our advertisers this month we are glad to welcome Tootals back again with their exceptionally handsome four-colour pages. Tootals' advertisements in NASH's last year received so much praise that we almost considered printing the magazine entirely in full colour in order to give them a proper environment. As it is, however, we give them laurels for the outstanding attractiveness of their displays. Women readers will need tremendous will power to resist them—which fortunately isn't necessary, since Tootals' products are fully as attractive as their advertisements.

Another lot of temptations, to which women will deliciously surrender, are those of Yardleys, whose cosmetics have spread from Bond Street to all parts of the world where smart women are seen. Yardleys have a free book, by the way, available to all readers of NASH's, called *Beauty Secrets of Bond Street*, which can be obtained by writing to them at 33 Old Bond Street, London, W.1.

Another type of advertisement which never fails to attract us is that which uses the work of cartoonists. One example is Bateman's picture of *The Man Who Doubted If Howard's Aspirin Was The Best*, and our readers may remember last month that Robertson's advertised their "Golden Shred" Orange Marmalade and "Silver Shred" Lemon Marmalade with a series of conversational pictures telling a story of its own. Incidentally, Robertson's have thought of a number of ways in which marmalade may be used, even though we can hardly imagine anything better than sponge pudding with marmalade.

Corot of Bond Street are advertising their "outdoor girl" two-piece costume for six guineas, and they will send you their new fashion guide for spring of this year. Corot are one of the few firms to offer the latest fashions on instalment terms. A coupon goes with their advertisement for your use.

For the hair there are Ladye Jayne beauty aids: the wave clip, the roll curler, the fairy grip and the curl grip, all inexpensive and obtainable from good hairdressers and stores everywhere.

Newey Brothers Limited of Birmingham have coiffure pins in brown, blonde, grey and black, which makes them almost invisible in the hair.

For the hands we recommend the Hand and Nail Culture Institute of 27 Old Bond Street, where readers of NASH's can obtain free advice either directly or by mail. A course of treatment at the Institute can overcome practically any difficulty which you may have with your hands or nails.

Probably the greatest desire of most of us is to know how we appear to other people. Mr. Shelly Castle promises that he will let us "see ourselves as others see us," if we write him a letter addressed to Dept. 153C, Castle House, Jackson's Lane, London, N.6. He offers to read character through handwriting, and will send free a complimentary copy of his book *The Great Discovery*, which will be a helpful guide in the understanding of self. His announcement appeared in NASH's last month.

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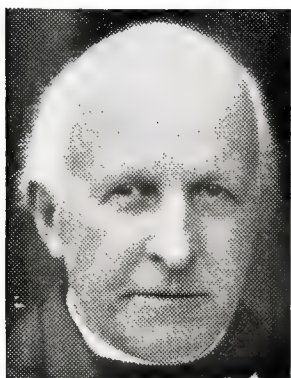
poison from the system, allow the weakened, irritated membranes and nerves to become strengthened, and genuinely overcome the habit. You can give up tobacco and enjoy yourself a thousand times better, while feeling always in robust health. My FREE book tells about the wonderful three days' method. Legions of testimonials. Inexpensive, reliable. Book on Tobacco and Snuff Habit sent in plain wrapper, FREE on request. Write to-day.

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# TRAVELLING THIS YEAR

## Suggestions for early Spring holidays

**M**ENTION the word "traveller" now, while you are at home in England, and what vistas of desolation—of uncomfortable hotels, of goods unsold, of a plentiful stock of smoking-room stories (all chestnuts), of a scarce supply of credit—does the word conjure up. To forestall criticism the average Englishman rushes in to curse most hotels of his native land. And it is, alas! very often true—except, of course, the grand names of London, which echo an exquisite peal of snobbery over the whole world—that the hotel is looked on rather as a place to retire to when active life is finished and reminiscing becomes its pathetic substitute, or as a nightly discomfort so great that to be on the road again in even an antediluvian motor can take on an aspect of bliss.

Yet, if one mentions the word "traveller" in any other country, what a different picture one conjures up. It is true that the person will be English; often it is true that he will be poor, but what a stickler for comfort! Not only does he know what he wants, but the whole world knows. Cleanliness he must have such as fills all Europe with surprise and consternation. His own speech must be spoken to such a nicety that, if an unlucky foreigner mistakes it for American, he can apologise for a week and not be forgiven. Often he demands a game of golf. Increasingly now he demands that all this nonsense of high finance and the exchange be ignored. The pound must be the pound, if it is or not.

And strangely enough, it works. Whether the ghost of Lord Bristol still tours the Continent with a coach of ferocious cats, inspiring all good hotels to covet his patronage in spite of the inconvenience of scratches, I do not know. The fact remains that, if you are lured by the P.L.M. to take a train South, you will find the pound is, rather miraculously, capable of buying quite a lot. The English traveller is still lord of the Riviera hotels, and they have realised that their terms must be reduced to reasonable proportions.

The railway ticket has also been reduced, and since the mimosa, the palm trees, the sunshine—even the golf courses and lawn tennis and squash courts—are of their usual length, strength and bigness, there is only the question of getting your own language included, so to speak, in the bill of fare. And the inhabitants of the Riviera have had, poor things, a long and stern enough course of what is required to make them bi-lingual



Ski-ing can be indulged in in May by going to Riksgränsen in Sweden

almost from the moment of their birth.

But though the search for the sun is probably the motive of most travellers—and this year's weather should add to their number—there are other sorts.

There is the joy of searching for things out of season; and the delight of the hostess—but not the strain on her purse—in providing new potatoes in December is paralleled, or perhaps surpassed, by the sportsman who finds that he can ski even in May. Nor is the oddity confined to that, for you can embark at Stockholm in a Lapland train. You will, on your thirty-six-hour journey, see reindeer pulling sleighs. And when you arrive and think that night has come, the midnight sun will appear in all its reddish glory. Perhaps this isn't more surprising, though, than to find English spoken at Riksgränsen straight at the end of Sweden.

Then there is another type of traveller, most rare and most admirable. That is the one who travels in his native land. It is a rare achievement to be able to see beauty close at hand, and an admirable thing too, for it may lead people to preserve more jealously the lovely English countryside. Certainly one of the best ways of seeing it would be to take an Eccles caravan. They look so compact from the outside that it is astounding how much room and comfort have been packed into that graceful, modern, streamlined form.

And finally, since we have begun with a good grouse at the English hotel, it is only fair that we end with praise for those that are praiseworthy. There is not space enough to make a list, for they are many. But we can take the Palace Hotel at Torquay as an example of what the English can do at home, if they set their minds to it. Within the domain of the hotel you can play golf, croquet, tennis and bowls (indoor as well as outdoor), squash or badminton. There is an excellent swimming-bath, a fine ball-room—even a cinema. But, as you may have guessed, if you wish to enjoy all these luxuries, it is wise to reserve rooms at least ten days ahead.



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# Your Good Points

by Ruth Hawthorne

**W**HEN it comes to growing old gracefully, as well as watching vigilantly the major matters of diet, exercise, and general care of the skin and hair, we have to consider the finer points to which when younger, we rarely need to give a thought. Eyes, and their surrounding area, chins, necks, elbows, the limberness of the knees and ankles—all these must be looked after, for they, with our hands, are the signposts of the years. Hands and ankles were discussed in the January issue, but here are a few notes on the rest of the list.

Eyes first, for eyes are almost the most important features we have and by them many people judge our character and our ages; doctors, our state of health; and oculists, the condition of the working mechanism of the eyes themselves. With most people, this mechanism changes so gradually as they grow older that it is hardly perceptible and, unless accompanied by headaches or inflamed eyelids, they neglect it until actual vision is impaired. That means glasses all the time all too often, and nothing else to be done about it. Meanwhile, the years of eyestrain, even the slightest, have made fine wrinkles appear at the temples—the beginning of “crow’s-feet,” and that ugly, vertical line between the eyebrows which no amount of massage will ever take out. Better to start early with glasses for reading and sewing and so obviate the strain when it begins.

Bad diet, too rich and too acid-making, tends to harden that outer ring around the pupil of the eye as well as giving the white part a most unpleasant liverish tint. Likewise, a poor diet, lacking proper nourishing elements, if maintained over any very long period, can cause a growing opacity of the lens. This is the most common cause of cataract in extreme old age, by the way. The cornea, the thin, protective covering of the lens itself, is easily injured by dust and flying particles, so infinitesimal that you never feel them, unless they are particularly poisonous and cause inflammation to arise. Add to your nightly regime, washing the eyes with some good lotion, especially if you live in town. Any chemist keeps a supply of the good makes. Warm milk is a nice, old-fashioned eye lotion, but you must be sure it is pure. Romantic ladies in France have always used rose water, for not only does it freshen the eyes, but it gives the eyelids a lovely soft look and a delicious scent.

Puffiness under the eyes is always a sign of a disturbed interior, usually something to do with the kidneys. If pronounced, a doctor should be consulted as it is one of nature’s warnings that all is not well within. There are various herbal packs and lotions which beauty specialists use or will show you how to use at home, which help a great deal in giving back the very tender skin around the eyes its youthful resiliency, and many of them advise a light application of muscle oil each night just under the eyes. This should be gently tapped in from the temples in towards the bridge of the nose. And *never* listen to anyone who tells you that everything can be fixed with a “slight operation” or injections of paraffin.

We spoke of this feelingly in the article devoted to facial surgery, but it bears repeating. A facial surgeon of good

standing may operate to remove the loose bags of skin if he thinks it necessary, but he will probably advise you to try a course of proper massage first as well as a visit to your own doctor to find out what caused them in the first place.

Ordinary beauty care of the eyes includes not only their daily bathe, but proper make-up. Even the most unpretentious of us can stand a bit of dark cream brushed on the lashes and brows, if mascara seems too much of a theatrical touch for our daily background. It gives not only a well-groomed look, but is also good for their growth, as it has not the drying properties of most mascaras. Also, a delicate film of clear oil or cream outlining the upper eyelids, if properly done and not overdone, gives a softening touch to the eyes themselves.

Chins are primarily a matter of bony structure, but much can be done by taking care of their covering tissue and skin. They, like eyes, denote to most people the sort of character you possess. It is interesting to note what D. H. Lawrence wrote to his wife when he first knew her: “Suddenly I seem to see your chin. I seem to love you, because you’ve got such a nice chin. Doesn’t it seem ridiculous?”

Every woman can have a nice chin to a good old age, if she begins early enough to take care of it.

Regular massage is a great help, if you have the time and money to indulge in it. Homework is called for every night. Many women who faithfully use creams and lotions from the chin line to the top of the forehead, never give their neck and under-chin any more care than a good scrub with soap and water. Yet your face begins at your collar-bones.

Never use a downward motion on the neck, always up and then never with any force. Gently, with the tips of the fingers, is the only way to apply any cream or lotion. When you get directly under the chin, patting with an upward motion is all that is required. A trained masseuse will seem to rub your neck quite vigorously, but she knows how to, and is pulling the muscles in the right direction instead of breaking them down, which you are likely to do.

One beauty specialist says that if every night of your life, you dip your thumbs in muscle oil or cream and beginning at the centre of your chin, press steadily along under the jaw-bone in opposite directions till you reach its ends just under each ear, you will always keep this line firm and clear-cut.

Another has a new reducing cream which she prescribes for her clients when they first detect a developing double chin. This is to be patted in every night followed in the morning by an astringent lotion. She has a nourishing cream for scrawny necks and too-bony chins.

Exercises are also imperative for the neck. The muscles must be kept firm and elastic. For this, proper exercises are as great a help as massage. These are of two types, the rotary and the grimaces. The former were included in the system of relaxing exercises described in the September issue, but I will repeat them briefly here.

Stand with the feet slightly apart, spine straight, body and shoulders relaxed. Imagine the head as a heavy

object rotating slowly as if there were a lead weight in the forehead which pulls it around and out from the base of the throat. Do this to the right at least six times and then repeat to the left. As a supplement to the rotating motion, when the muscles are thoroughly relaxed, let the head fall sharply forward as if it had been suddenly hit at the back. Do this sideways and backwards also, but only after the rotating—otherwise you may twist a muscle and achieve a stiff neck.

The grimacing exercises are exactly that and nothing else. You just make faces—the worse the better—and it is suggested that you do it in strict privacy for the sake of the peace of mind of the rest of your family. The idea is to look as much like a grinning Chinese war mask as possible, gnashing teeth and all. You will be surprised to find that if done vigorously enough, you can raise the muscles of your chest at the same time, which is extremely good for them.

Ears can always do with a bit of cream rubbed in the lobes as you grow older, too, to ward off their getting withered and crinkled. Ears grow larger as the years advance, which is one more reason for keeping them pleasant to look at. If they are of the stand-out variety to the point of humour, it is a simple enough operation to-day to have them nipped in by a surgeon, for it is too late to do any good by wearing a cap at night after you are very young indeed. Many women automatically brush a dusting of rouge over the lobes as part of their regular make-up to give them a fresh, rosy tint. And, of course, the ear lobes are the perfect spots, with the wrists, to put a drop of perfume, as any successful coquette can tell you.

Our own elbows are something we can go through an entire lifetime and never see. But other people do, so rub a little cream in them every night to keep the skin soft. “Cup” them in half a lemon every now and then to keep them a good colour. They form one of the few joints in our bodies which get sufficient exercise, but even then a few additional arm-swinging movements every day help to keep them completely free. They are a favourite spot for rheumatism and acid crystals to form and then they need massage.

About all you can do for knees is to use them to keep them flexible and the muscles around them in good shape. You should be able to bend your knees as easily and gracefully as you do your elbows, but can you? Most older women walk as if they had no knee hinges—or ankle joints, either, for that matter—and this tends to throw the whole body out of line in a most awkward fashion. The knees, like all the joints of the body, are lubricated with what is called the synovial fluid. When this is lacking in amount or not circulating freely, it makes them stiff; and when you bend, you bend to the accompaniment of a series of cracking sounds, mirth from the bystanders, and annoyance to yourself. Keep on bending and the cracking will disappear unless you are very run down or extremely rheumatic.

Few people grow old like Lord Byron’s gentleman in the castle of Chillon, in a single night. You have many years to get ready for definite old age and there is not much excuse these days for arriving at it unbecomingly and unattractively unless you are either lazy or very ignorant indeed. The time to begin taking thought about it, however, is long before it arrives.



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# TRUTH about Mrs. Brown

by  
V. S. PRITCHETT





## *The greatest battle of the century between two women who claimed the same unfortunate man*

**T**HE story of Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Ferrett is an extraordinary one, and yet, stripped of its extraordinary clothes, it is the story of all London boarding houses, a tale of loneliness. Entering this arbitrary community the newcomer does not at first suspect the trap. The motor-cars of the young wait outside, the telephone bell rings, the post lies on the hall table, trays rattle on landings, doors open, gay-looking women with their hair in curlers slipper along in flowered dressing-gowns to the bathroom, there is a continual coming and going in the tiled hall. But soon this vague gaiety is seen to be a routine, the faces become familiar, each room like a glass case in the insect house is known to have a separate life in it, the hours of arrival and departure are known. The letters in the hall, the ring of the telephone, the sound of a wireless, are evidence that everybody's business is separate. Nothing, not even the common latchkey, unites them.

This is no great matter for the floating population of such places. But this preoccupied tide does not bear all happily away; some things get stranded. They stick, first of all uncertainly, but finally, caught by misfortune or inertia, they remain fast. They get older. "We

are all like a happy family here," says the landlady bravely. "Mr. X has been with me ten years, Mrs. Y fifteen. Miss Z came for a fortnight, and after fifteen years she is still with me. Mrs. Blank, they say, we would not leave you for anything."

And then she adds, as if she were talking of people who suffered from some sickness which she must not name, "I try to make them comfortable." As they get older they begin to ask themselves, remembering they once had a house or hoped to have one, "Shall I die here?" The young men, those who will probably escape, laugh at the specimens in these living museums. The young women, always at war with the older women, secretly pity them, take cups of tea to them when they are sick, and after the warm impulse, go back to their own rooms suddenly tired and alarmed, looking into the future.

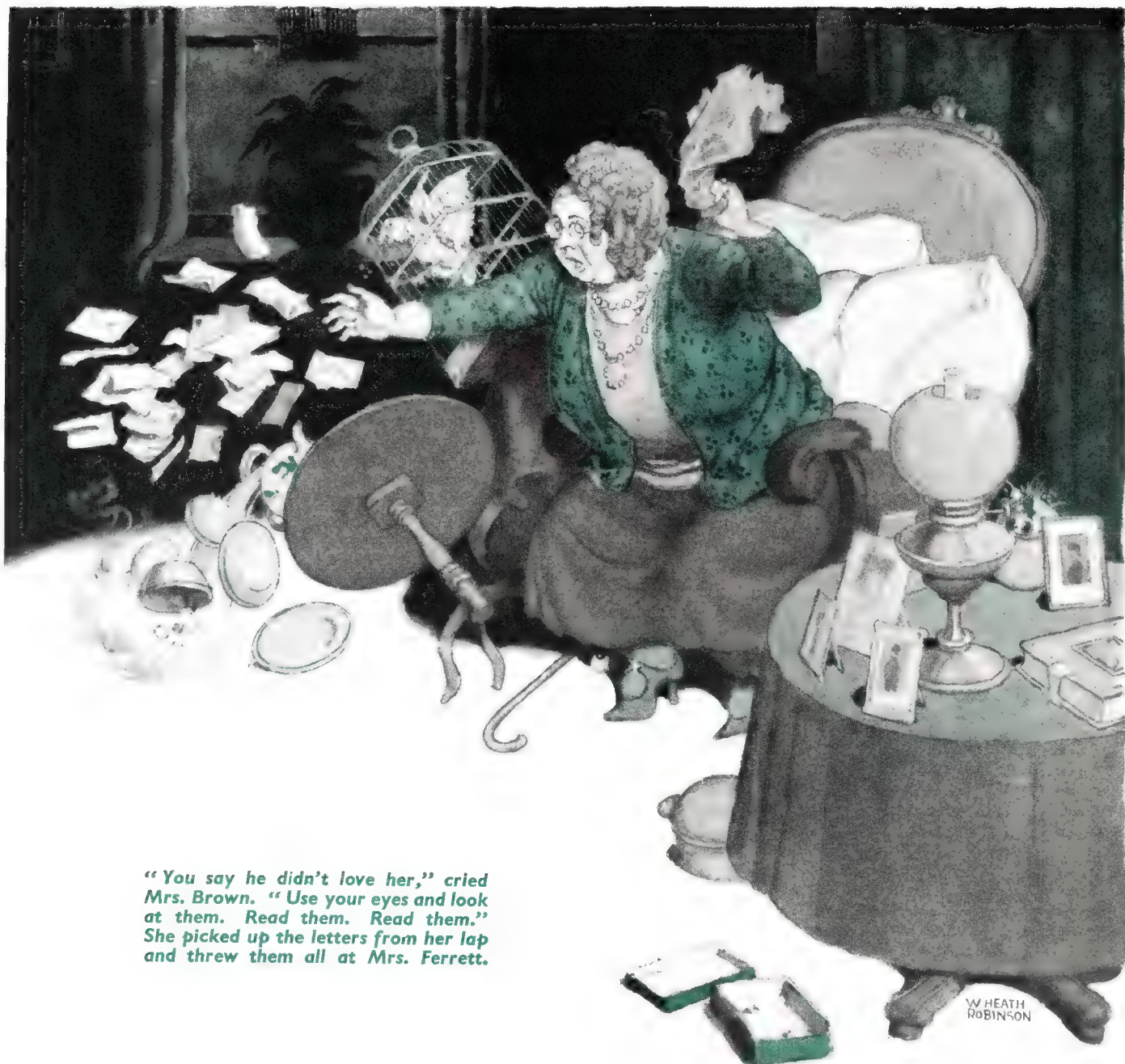
In the house which Mrs. Ferrett had just bought with the small capital left to her by her second husband, Mrs. Brown had lived for the past fifteen years. No one else had stayed there so long and she was handed on from proprietor to proprietor, like some grotesque figure in giblet-coloured marble which is passed down in a family and which no one has the courage to give away. She gave no trouble and stayed in her own

room at the top of the house, cooking her own meals and not going out for days on end. The truth was that she found the stairs trying; but she was too proud, protesting always about her youth—she was an old, unexercised, fifty-seven—to stop for breath if anyone were coming. The boarders stepped back into doorways, watching her pass.

The proprietor before Mrs. Ferrett had once suggested that Mrs. Brown should move to a lower room, but this had put the old lady into a temper. She was a very suspicious woman, wily and watchful, who locked her room even if she were out of it for a minute, and she had read into the proposal, the desire to get her out of the house for ever. The







*"You say he didn't love her," cried Mrs. Brown. "Use your eyes and look at them. Read them. Read them." She picked up the letters from her lap and threw them all at Mrs. Ferrett.*

W. HEATH  
ROBINSON

prospect frightened and appalled her. She had grown into the place and was under the delusion she ruled it, sitting in her room above the heads of the other boarders like a queen.

In a sense she did rule the house. Mrs. Brown, as she was called—and no one knew that she had no right to the name—was not a lonely woman. She had no friends and relations, nor had she much money, but she was a cunning actress and a voluble talker. She lured the young people to her room by telling their fortunes—having wormed all the gossip out of the maid in advance—and told them fantastic stories of her life, about the countries she had seen, the celebrities she had met, the wealth of her husband. Her rough, bitter voice, the contemptuous sarcasm with which she treated the girls, the absurd coquetry she showed to the young men, all helped to make her legends comical, mysterious and even a little frightening; and since she was one of those women who never

know when they are telling lies or who have almost forgotten the truth, she exploited her reminiscences and life story with all the irresponsibility of an artist.

She was a squat, thick-set woman, thick from neck to ankle, thick in voice, thick in the rust-coloured paint that was stamped as by some sticky transfer on her cheeks. She had small thick plump hands with thick rings on them and her chestnut wig had dense curls in it which shone against her temples like a Della Robbia fruitage.

The story of Mrs. Brown's life was handed down with her. Continuously embellished when it told of the wealth and travels and influence of her husband, so that one or two malevolent boarders asked her if she had come across Shackleton in the Antarctic—to which, undaunted, she replied, "Yes, but not in the Antarctic. My husband de-tested both the poles"—it was not an incredible story in the main. But it had

one melodramatic moment. This came after the description of the death of her husband. A month after his funeral, she said, she went to the local news-agents to buy a paper and they gave her some letters addressed to her husband.

"Twenty-five years of marriage!" she used to say, drawing in her thick lips as if to shoot out her scorn in pellets. "Twenty-five years of deception." (That phrase became a byword in the house.) "He'd been keeping another woman. Those were her letters."

And when, hiding their smiles, the young women said sympathetically, "You can't trust men," Mrs. Brown replied pointedly at them. "It's women you can trust. To judge by your hands, some of you will have a lot to answer for." She was always bitter with the young women.

Then followed, naturally: "Did you know the other woman? What did you say to her?" Mrs. Brown's manner





changed when these questions were put. Her voice was more cautious, the stare in her brown, dull eyes became watchful. No, she said, she had never found out who the woman was. "And if I did," she said between her short teeth, "I wouldn't say anything to her. I should just look at her. Nothing more. Just look." And opening her eyes wide she would say loudly, "And look volumes."

Then Mrs. Brown asked questions about the law and the possession of letters and pushed it on to the matter of blackmail. People got the impression that she thought the other woman was pursuing her, tracking her down to blackmail her because, having discovered those letters, she had kept them. The silliness of this fear strengthened belief in the first part of the story. People said either "the old witch" was living on blackmail herself or had developed a persecution mania about the other woman. Whatever the explanation, it added to the mystery of Mrs. Brown and the mystery of Mrs. Brown assured her of perpetual company.

But the truth about Mrs. Brown's story which she alone in the world knew and could never tell, even when after fifteen years of legend-making she could remember it, was simply that it had not occurred to her. It had occurred indeed to a Mrs. Brown, but not to the so-called Mrs. Brown of the boarding house. Her real name was Miss Millerd. She had managed a restaurant for years in Leicester under her true name of Millerd. And then fifteen years ago she had left Leicester at a week's notice, left the memory of Miss Millerd in a third-class carriage at King's Cross terminus and became Mrs. Brown with Mrs. Brown's story, to the world thereafter.

For she had written the letters to Mr. Brown, she had been "the other woman" of the story. Scarcely recovered from the shock of his death and at a time of life when many women become unstable, she learned that those letters had been given to his wife, and panic became added to the guilt. She thanked heaven her address or her name was not on the letters which contained words of

passionate intimacy and also withering ridicule of her lover's wife, but remembered with despair there was the evidence of the postmarks.

She threw up her job, collected the money she had thoughtfully obtained from Mr. Brown and the savings she had, and escaped—as it seemed to her—from the investigations of the real, invisible, unknown Mrs. Brown to London. Nothing but shattering grief and imagination disordered by guilt, could have so addled her usually shrewd judgment. But once the train left Leicester she began to recover.

The sight of new country, the green volume of composed hills and trees rich and at ease with summer, calmed her panic. Tears came into her eyes as she sat in the hot train, looking at the beautiful country. She could not believe that her racy commercial traveller in the cloth trade was dead, no longer a man six feet four high, whose voice she could know in a thousand. She had not seen him dead. His wife had seen that, the sudden last of him. Miss Millerd went to an hotel and there she signed sadly "Mrs. Brown," the ciphers of a distant valediction to the dead. It was a secret assertion of her rights in him, for the eye of heaven.

It was when they called her "Mrs. Brown" at the hotel that she saw the perfection of it. Why should she not henceforth be what she had always wanted to be, but which his being alive and married prevented? No true Mrs. Brown could ever discover her under that name. And if the name, why not also the life—how she had envied the real Mrs. Brown her status—and therefore the story. And the life and story, they were impenetrable disguises. You paralyse the enemy by becoming the enemy.

She had envied the true Mrs. Brown, whom she had never seen, and imagined that she, the wife, had everything; Miss Millerd now became the Mrs. Brown of

her once jealous imagination. For example, it had happened that Mr. Brown had taken his real wife to Boulogne for a week-end during their honeymoon, and Miss Millerd had never been able to forgive her this. Free to create, Miss Millerd's imagination began its revenge. The journey was extended to Paris, from Paris it leaped to the Riviera and the Mediterranean, opening up a world of unending fantasy. As the first year of her new life became the second, the succeeding years accumulated the blur of time, the new Mrs. Brown grew in wealth, in social position, in delightful adventure. Like the phoenix she arose, fantastic and splendid, from the flames which had consumed the humble Miss Millerd.

The extraordinary thing was that after fifteen years, when she, the false Mrs. Brown, was at the height of her powers, when she had turned herself into pure legend, the real Mrs. Brown should have come to live under the same roof. She was Mrs. Ferrett now, a slow-minded woman. She had married again and for the second time in her life was a widow.

Every morning the maid would take a jug of milk to Mrs. Brown, who got up later than the other boarders. Mrs. Brown would be in bed, watching the girl light the fire and bring in the coal scuttle. On mornings when Mrs. Brown was garrulous the girl might be in the room for an hour, replying to Mrs. Brown's questions and insinuations about

**Mr. Brown had a way with him. She had seen him one  
She would never forget the days when he drove his**





people in the house. Hostile, boastful and on guard with the boarders, Mrs. Brown was easy and flattering and confidential with the maid, just as if they were two housemaids talking together.

"Thank you, dear," she would say to the girl, who would slave for the old lady in return for this affection. The maid was a plain, strong girl with a voice soft and shy of speaking. She attached herself like an animal to Mrs. Brown, liking to stay in her room, gazing at her with pale vacant eyes.

"What's the name of the new landlady, dear?"

"Mrs. Ferrett."

"Ferrett," said Mrs. Brown. "Come to ferret us out, eh?"

It was Mrs. Brown's great fear when every new proprietor came. The maid was startled by the play on Mrs. Ferrett's name.

"They're going to paint. She said she was going to give it all a good painting," the girl said.

"If she thinks I'm going to have painters in here she's mistaken!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown ruminated. The girl gazed at Mrs. Brown's

red hair. She was a religious girl and she was always in awe of Mrs. Brown's wig, which had a mystical meaning; for Mrs. Brown had once told her she was going to be buried in it so that Mr. Brown would be sure to recognise her at the Golden Gates. The maid saw this picture clearly. She was the only person who saw Mrs. Brown without her wig.

So Mrs. Brown was prepared for Mrs. Ferrett when she came to see her about the decorators. It was the first meeting, and both Mrs. Ferrett and Mrs. Brown were on their guard.

"I won't have painters near my furniture," said Mrs. Brown.

"They are a very good firm," said Mrs. Ferrett. "Very careful."

"Painters are painters, Mrs. Ferrett."

Later Mrs. Brown said to the maid: "I didn't say anything. I just looked at her."

Mrs. Ferrett came again. This second interview was less successful, because now Mrs. Brown had taken Mrs. Ferrett's measure. Mrs. Ferrett was fighting for her new house and Mrs. Brown was fighting for her room. She saw that Mrs. Ferrett was afraid of her, and blew

herself out like an old frog.

Mrs. Brown had often seen women like Mrs. Ferrett, but Mrs. Ferrett had never seen anyone like Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown saw before her a woman of equal height, but slight and stiff, her long flat-chested body leaning forward on her short legs. She had a colourless face and anxious grey eyes, and the skin of her neck seemed to have been scrubbed clean. She spoke in short, tentative and worried questions, anxious for sympathy and fearing to offend. She was one of those harassed women, whose blouses hang flat over their bosoms and who say to themselves as they open a letter, "Oh! I hope nothing has happened!"; and as they run upstairs: "I must not fail. I must not fail." A dull, monotonous reiteration of the fixed idea (as if she were a sewing machine) which became a kind of courage of which she was totally unaware was in her; all she could do was to keep one idea in her head for a long time.

Her first husband, Mr. Brown, had died. She had discovered the letters. She had married again. Her second husband had died. She had put her savings into this boarding house—it was impossible for her to distinguish these events from one another. All she knew was that life was a grey thing that kept on going—like traffic in the street. You went to bed at night and found it up

*day and she had thought at once, "I shall be very unhappy." car very quickly, but still with one arm round her.*



## Truth about Mrs. Brown

already and happening again in the morning, and you were alone without any time to understand it. She was very afraid she might fail with the boarding house and lose her money. She had taken refuge in the fixed idea that the place must be redecorated. It was a task. She hid herself in tasks. She sat in her room on the edge of tears when she found that at the very beginning, her whole venture was threatened by the implacable refusal of Mrs. Brown.

Although they had met twice, neither Mrs. Brown nor Mrs. Ferrett had the smallest suspicion that they were talking to their life-long enemy. Mrs. Ferrett, of course, was struck by the name of Mrs. Brown, but the name is common. Her anxious heart, when she heard the name the first time, did pause as if it had heard a favourable omen. The clan of Browns might, in some mystical way, be proud to hold together. But after her first dealings with Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Ferrett saw that (as had often happened before in her life when she had ventured to hope), hope had once more led her into false depths. Brown was not the name of hope, but the name of grey, incomprehensible, worried life. Brown was the name of the dead, the name of deceit. Brown was like the traffic in the street.

For the third time Mrs. Ferrett went

up to see Mrs. Brown. It was an afternoon in August, most of the boarders were away, the house, like some closed museum, was too warm. Mrs. Ferrett brushed back the white hair from her narrow forehead, picked up her big black handbag which she always carried about the house, and climbed the last flight of stairs to Mrs. Brown's room.

"Can I have a few words with you, Mrs. Brown, please, about the decorators?" asked Mrs. Ferrett in an awkward tone of ingratiating.

"As many as you like. It's a free country," answered Mrs. Brown in her rough, unsociable voice. She settled down to enjoy herself. Steam was puffing out of the kettle on the fire which burned in Mrs. Brown's room on the hottest days. This bubbling of water going to waste in disorderly steam, worried Mrs. Ferrett.

"That's my tea," said Mrs. Brown. "It can wait."

So she let Mrs. Ferrett know that this was war; she would not be offered a cup of tea. The kettle went on puffing.

Then the struggle started with Mrs. Ferrett glancing continuously in agony at this interrupting, steam-plumed ally, the kettle.

"Of course, Mrs. Brown, I quite see how difficult it would be to move your things, but . . ." Mrs. Ferrett was saying.

"Impossible," said Mrs. Brown, fold-

ing her arms, which made her look thicker than ever.

It seemed so, Mrs. Ferrett had to confess. For Mrs. Brown's room was not merely a furnished room, but an aviary, a laundry, a kitchen, a greenhouse, a veritable fortification made out of a lifetime's furniture. A row of tables with ferns, photographs and two bird-cages, containing canaries, divided the room in two. In one half was Mrs. Brown's bed, at the foot was an ironing board ready for action; an oil stove for cooking was beside the fireplace and from the gas bracket—for Mrs. Brown had resisted the installation of electric light many years back in her tenancy—to the window hung a line of washing.

Mrs. Ferrett had found a seat on a sofa, whose back arched like a heraldic unicorn against the wall, and there were two desks and a marble-topped commode besides. The room was the rich accumulation of fifteen years' tenancy, and yet more of the accumulation lay unpacked in two cabin trunks behind a curtain at the side of the fireplace; a place with different climates, different temperatures and different odours in every corner. Mrs. Ferrett, bewildered by the scene, blundered into her new proposal that Mrs. Brown should be given a nice room downstairs rent free.

"I have always paid my rent and I always will pay my rent, don't you be

ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. HEATH ROBINSON





afraid of that, Mrs. Ferrett," said Mrs. Brown at once. "For fifteen years I've never been a half-day late with my rent, and that is more than some of your hussies downstairs can say."

"Oh, I know, I know," said Mrs. Ferrett. "I didn't mean that."

But Mrs. Brown had not finished. She now took offence at the word "nice." Was she not "nice"? Was her room not "nice"? Then the Brown legend showed its head. Mrs. Ferrett had heard the boarders laugh about the legend, but she had never gathered what they were laughing at. Mrs. Ferrett was always alarmed by the confidence of laughing people. And she was one of those women who hear only bits here and there of the things they listen to, and on those things her mind fixed credulously.

"I would not part with these things for the world," said Mrs. Brown in a deep voice as if accusing Mrs. Ferrett of trying to rob her in the process of removal. "They have all come from abroad." Yachts sailed by, Mrs. Brown upon them; along came the Mediterranean like an enormous blue fish, race-horses galloped, country houses were run up, on terraces walked Mrs. Brown nodding to the peerage.

"I am a widow also," said Mrs. Ferrett, hoping to win Mrs. Brown round while she was warm with her memories.

Mrs. Brown had heard this, indeed she had heard that Mrs. Ferrett had been twice a widow. Nothing awoke Mrs. Brown's desire to create impressive fiction than a little fact. Her look abruptly became professional.

"Show me your hand," Mrs. Brown said.

"My hand?"

"Give me your hand."

Mrs. Ferrett still did not understand.

"It's all in your hand. If your husband's dead it's in your hand."

"Oh," said Mrs. Ferrett understanding at last. "I don't believe it, it's all nonsense."

"It depends," said Mrs. Brown mysteriously, "upon the hand. Any fool can make up the future and tell a lot of lies. What they can't do is tell the past."

The more Mrs. Ferrett thought about this remark the truer it seemed. The room was hot. Outside was the yellow August sun, inside was the yellow flame of the fire like an animal licking itself in the grate.

"Some hands hide everything. Some tell," said Mrs. Brown. "Yours tells. I can see that from here," said Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Ferrett dropped her hands guiltily to her sides. Then she looked at them cautiously. With a heavy sigh Mrs. Brown got up and pulled the kettle off

the fire. Then she walked over to Mrs. Ferrett. Without a word she picked up Mrs. Ferrett's right hand, gave a bored glance at it, sniffed and dropped it at once. She walked slowly back to her chair. Mrs. Ferrett in consternation gazed at Mrs. Brown, who settled herself comfortably down and did not speak for a full minute.

"You've had two husbands?" Mrs. Brown said at last.

"Where?" exclaimed Mrs. Ferrett. "That's true. You're quite right. Show me."

"They're there all right. Both of them," smiled Mrs. Brown. She loved the power she felt on these occasions. Mrs. Ferrett seemed a funny, silly little woman. Mrs. Brown, wine-warmed by success, became expansive.

"I had enough with one husband," she said, preparing as usual to tell the full story of her life. Out came the famous phrase. "Twenty-five years of marriage! Huh! Twenty-five years of deception!" She cleared her throat. "I was a fool," she said. "It was all in my hand, but I thought I was clever and didn't believe it. Every word of it was there. When my husband died, Mrs. Ferrett, I found twenty letters from another woman—twenty, mark you—waiting for him at a tobacconist's shop. And he said he never smoked!"

Mrs. Ferrett felt she had jumped

*Mrs. Brown was not a lonely woman. She lured the young people to her room by telling their fortunes and fantastic tales of her life, which were comical and even frightening.*





naked out of her clothes when she heard this.

"A tobacconist's, did you say?" she said in amazement, and about to cry, "That's what happened to me. That's what happened to me."

But to Mrs. Brown, once she was launched on her story, all comment was stimulus to continue to the end. She deployed the tale like an army. Out every detail came, and was trooped into position. Mrs. Ferrett listened with growing excitement, anxious to cry out her news; the only difference in the stories was one which increased her sympathy. Poor Mrs. Brown had been ill in hospital abroad and had not even been able to come to the funeral of her husband. The poor woman had not even seen him in his coffin. The end, however, was disconcerting.

"It's just as well I didn't see him," said Mrs. Brown, "because if I had seen him and had known then what I knew afterwards, I would have slapped his face."

This was a small setback to Mrs. Ferrett's amazement, but it soon recovered its exaltation.

"Mrs. Brown!" she cried. "That is what happened to me. It is almost exactly what happened to me—with my first husband. The letters were at the shop. I got them. It's exactly the same."

Mrs. Ferrett now looked at Mrs. Brown without fear or anxiety, but with sympathy. An extraordinary bond had suddenly united them, a proof of the guidance in which the timid soul deeply believed. Mrs. Brown could not be an enemy now, but a friend. They were creatures bound by some astonishing experience. There had been truth in the Brown omen. Two lonely deceived Mrs. Browns united at last. Two deceiving Browns in the grave!

Mrs. Ferrett's eyes shone; but although Mrs. Brown's eyes had opened there was no light in them. They were black, implacable and dull. If the emotional Mrs. Ferrett saw a bond in this similarity of experience and the practical Mrs. Ferrett saw the decorators stripping the walls of the room, her loneliness gone and the boarding house succeeding, Mrs. Brown saw no bond at all, but a wider antagonism. Mrs. Ferrett's story had attacked the foundation of her life. She was introducing a rival legend. There was not room for two widows deceived in the same way. The name of Brown, the sacred name, was for one woman only.

Mrs. Brown's vanity swelled and curled like a storm before this attempt at dethronement from her unique position. So great was her vanity, so blown out with the pleasure she had in impressing the puny Mrs. Ferrett, so thoroughly did Mrs. Brown believe her story, that it had not occurred to her that the whole lifetime lie was on the point of exposure. She got up from her chair to annihilate Mrs. Ferrett's story. She walked slowly past Mrs. Ferrett to the trunk behind the curtain, staring with an expression of deep offence. She opened the trunk and from under some clothes brought out a photograph. She looked at it for a second as if daring the figure in it to deny his identity and then handed it

to Mrs. Ferrett.

"My husband two years before he died," Mrs. Brown said and walked over to her chair with her back to Mrs. Ferrett.

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Ferrett, worried by the coolness of Mrs. Brown, who seemed to reject the bond.

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But she smiled her thanks. She looked down at the photograph, tilting it down to get the window reflection out of the glass. Then she exclaimed and looked at Mrs. Brown, who was now enthroned in her chair and facing her with satisfaction.

"But it's my husband," said Mrs. Ferrett.

"Your husband!" Mrs. Brown replied like a harsh schoolmistress speaking to a stupid child. Her vanity was still so solid, the legend so dense in its foliage, that she did not yet see the

significance of Mrs. Ferrett's cry. "I didn't say it was your husband. I said it was the photograph of my husband. Do listen, Mrs. Ferrett."

"I know my husband," said Mrs. Ferrett, rising up. "That's him. Of course it is. It's my husband."

"Say what you mean, Mrs. Ferrett! Listen to what I say. Your husband, your husband, your husband," mocked Mrs. Brown, getting out of temper. "Don't talk nonsense, Mrs. Ferrett. How can he be your husband?"

And then the red carpet at Mrs. Brown's feet seemed to open and become an immense, bottomless chasm, and she about to topple over headlong into it. She gripped the arm of her chair as she suddenly saw the horror of her situation. There, on the far side of the chasm, puny, white-haired, mad-looking, silly, was the true Mrs. Brown who had tracked her down and caught her at last. The man in the photograph was Mrs. Ferrett's first husband. Mrs. Brown's jaw became hopelessly loose at its joints. She could not stop opening and closing her mouth.

But, as often happens, a terrified person looks not terrified, but terrifying. Mrs. Brown's eyes were bulging like a toad's. The grip on the arms of the chair looked to Mrs. Ferrett like the grip of someone preparing themselves for a murderous spring.

"What was his name?" asked Mrs. Brown in a hoarse trembling voice; but to Mrs. Ferrett this seemed to be the tremor of rage.

"His name was Ferrett," said Mrs. Ferrett, confusing her husbands in her consternation.

"Then he could not have been your husband, Mrs. Ferrett," said Mrs. Brown, "because his name was Brown."

"I mean Brown," said Mrs. Ferrett. "My first husband's name was Brown. Ferrett was my second."

"You don't even know your husband's name," said Mrs. Brown.

"It was Brown."

"You said Ferrett."

"Yes. No. I mean Brown. I know it was my husband. I've got his photograph." She still held it in her hand and looked again. "It's the same one."

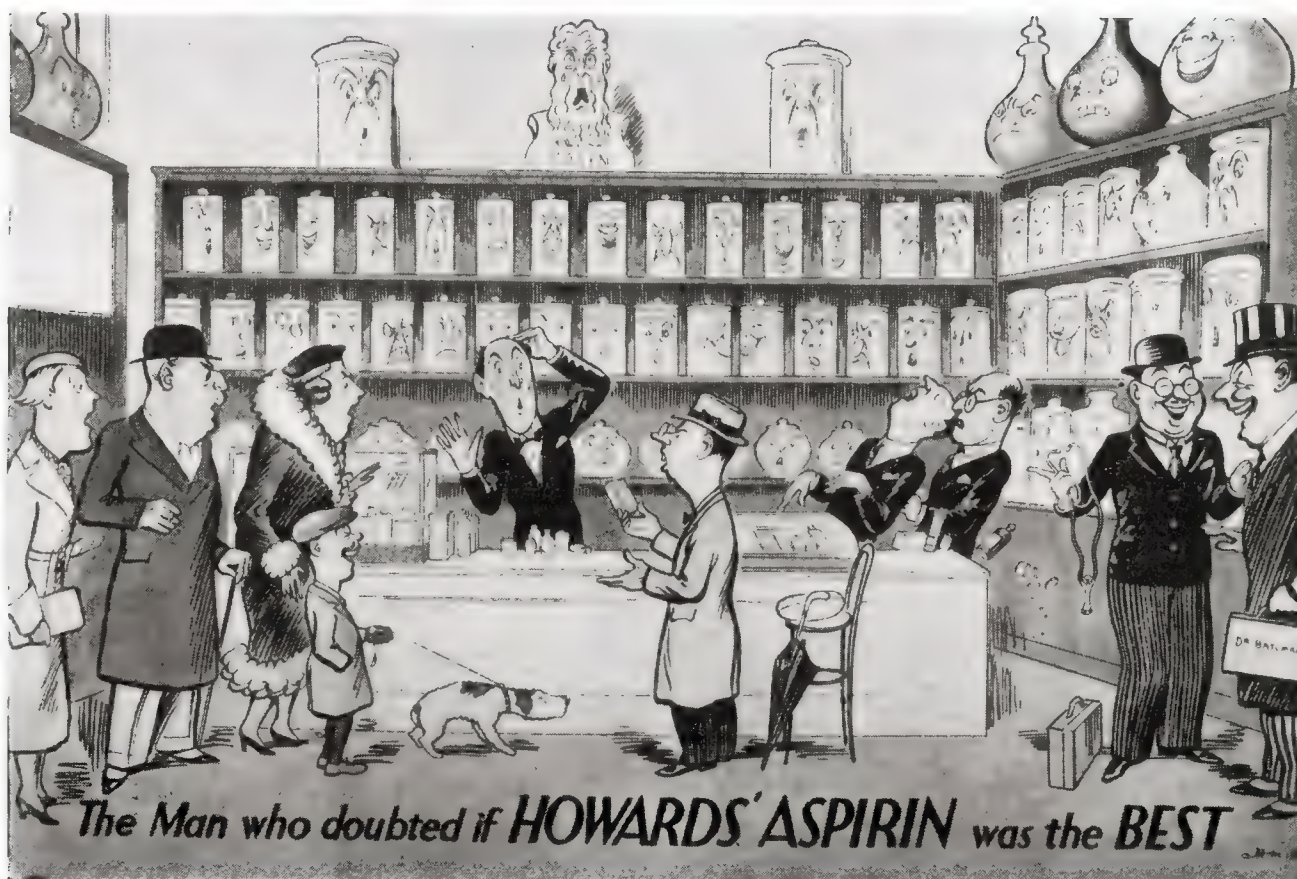
"Are you telling me I'm a liar?" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, setting her teeth to keep her jaw steady and shouting to silence the thumps of her heart.

"Oh no, no," said Mrs. Ferrett. "It can't be the same person. There must be some mistake. I'll get the photograph. There must be some mistake. There must be. Mr. Brown and I were married for seventeen years. We lived in Watford all our lives. Everyone knew us." Though his death had occurred fifteen years ago her memory gave her confidence. Mrs. Ferrett brightened. "You said your husband was a wealthy man, but Mr. Brown and I were never rich. We never went out of England, except one week-end to Boulogne soon after we were married. We never went anywhere."

"Mr. Brown's money was in cloth," said Mrs. Brown in her grand manner. "We went abroad every year."

"A commercial traveller in cloth?" asked Mrs. Ferrett, weak with renewed anxiety.





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"My husband was certainly not a commercial traveller. How dare you say he was?"

"I said *my* husband," said Mrs. Ferrett.

"My dear Mrs. Ferrett," said Mrs. Brown out of her thick lips, "we cannot both have been his wife. London is not Constantinople."

"I know he was never in Constantinople," pleaded Mrs. Ferrett.

"You'd better get your photograph," said Mrs. Brown.

"I will. I will," cried Mrs. Ferrett, only too glad to escape from the room.

As she went downstairs she spoke aloud to herself, her voice giving a choke at every step.

"All my life," she moaned as she went downstairs to her room, "has been full of disasters. First one husband dying, then another husband dying, and now just as I set up in business, this happens. It will smash it. I know it will. I shall fail." The more she tried in her panic to remember details of her life with her first husband the more chaotic the film of her memory became. It was spinning by so fast that she could see nothing. She took the photograph of Mr. Brown from her mantelpiece, where it stood beside the photograph of her second husband and ran back to Mrs. Brown's room.

There was no doubt that Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Ferrett were claiming the same man. The photographs were identical. They came from the same photographer. The only difference was that the husband had been more affectionate with Mrs. Brown than with his wife. At the bottom of Mrs. Brown's photograph he had written in a fine hand, "With love from Freddy."

He was a tall man, with a head as bald as ivory except for banks of black hair at the side. He had a black moustache, like a pair of loaded paint brushes, and he was wearing a loud check riding-coat, breeches and leather gaiters. He looked as if he had just come out of a public-house after a morning's ride. The lids of the dark eyes were creased and lowered with the lateral amusement of slyness. One expected the free hand to go to his moustache and give it a squeeze and a wipe and the pleased mouth to open into a carnivorous guffaw at the two women.

"We were married at the Congregational Church in Hornsey. My father and mother were there," said Mrs. Ferrett hurriedly. "My two sisters were bridesmaids. We went back to our house in Pemberton Road and caught the train for the Isle of Wight. I've got my marriage lines. I will show them to you. It was in February 1901. I shall remember it as long as I live."

Mrs. Brown picked up her own photograph and put it on the mantelpiece, saying quietly as she did so:

"I was married to Mr. Brown in the June of '97. We were married," she paused impressively, "in Truro Cathedral. The Dean, dear Mr. Fordyce, married us. My husband's family was well known in Truro. We went to Nice; it was very hot; the heat never agreed with me; but we met some friends of his, Sir John and Lady Camp and they invited us on to their yacht. The blue of the Mediterranean!" she said. "He bought me these pearls there," she said, touching the necklace around her short neck. She stared implacably at Mrs. Ferrett. "If what you say is true," continued Mrs. Brown in her coldest voice, "you may have *lived* with Mr. Brown but you were not his wife."

"I can show you my marriage lines," repeated Mrs. Ferrett.

## Truth about Mrs. Brown

"Any bigamist can get marriage lines," said Mrs. Brown, becoming colder and colder, as she felt her power. "All I can say is you were not married to Mr. Brown. Any man can tell a tale but the law's the law."

There are the people who use the word "law" with emphasis and gusto, and there are the people whose skin goes chill at the word. Coming from the lips of the masterful Mrs. Brown the word rang sudden alarm in Mrs. Ferrett. All her thin veins seemed to be full of fire-bells. Taken by surprise, like a boxer who is still thinking about the first blow on the jaw when he receives a second and a third, her mind had not caught up with the situation.

Mrs. Ferrett was so dazed that all she could feel was that Mrs. Brown was infecting her with her own (Mrs. Brown's) unreality. The legendariness of Mrs. Brown seemed to be turning her (Mrs. Ferrett) into a legend, too. Mrs. Ferrett was a woman so slow and worried that she could only assert her own story; it never occurred to her to question Mrs. Brown's story, or to examine the evidence for it. But Mrs. Brown rode on. She still spoke in a quiet voice:

"I have always wondered who that other woman was, Mrs. Ferrett," she said, glaring.

"What other woman, Mrs. Brown? Please, I don't understand."

"You don't understand!" said Mrs. Brown scornfully. "You don't know, of course, who wrote those letters to my husband!" Mrs. Brown's tongue involuntarily gave a lick to her lips.

"You mean I wrote those letters you found at the stationer's?" asked Mrs. Ferrett.

"Well, who else can have written them?" asked Mrs. Brown. "And it was a tobacconist's, not a stationer's."

"I never wrote a letter to a tobacconist in my life," said Mrs. Ferrett. "I never wrote letters to your husband. I don't know your husband. I only know my husband." She clutched her photograph.

"Twenty-five years of deception," muttered Mrs. Brown. "He was keeping you all the time."

"I don't know what you mean," rallied Mrs. Ferrett. "He was my husband. I know he was my husband."

"A good many people say they know when they only think they know," said Mrs. Brown.

"You forget," said Mrs. Ferrett, her mind quickening before Mrs. Brown's derision, "that I have letters."

Mrs. Brown had forgotten this and, quick as she had been to stave off discovery and inspired as she had been in sudden invention, she had not been able to think of everything. Her main stimulus had been the smallness of Mrs. Ferrett. The mention of the letters was a shock. The letters had been the cause of Mrs. Brown's original flight. The memory of them still alarmed her. Possibly because she, in Mrs. Ferrett's shoes, might have used the letters for the purposes of blackmail, Mrs. Brown was genuinely afraid of being blackmailed herself.

Mrs. Brown became watchful and alarmed again. She could not conceal it; but the wretched Mrs. Ferrett read this as anger.

"What do you mean, you have got letters?" Mrs. Brown asked.

"I told you," Mrs. Ferrett pursued her supposed advantage, though her voice was shaking, "that I had found letters."

"And I suppose you are suggesting I wrote them," said Mrs. Brown sarcastically.



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"Oh no, no," said Mrs. Ferrett, trying in vain to think what she had suggested. The idea had not entered her head. Her mind was still fixed on claiming her husband.

"You are. I know you are. I thought you'd try that," Mrs. Brown said. "And suppose I had? I suppose I had a right to send letters to my own husband. The law's the law, Mrs. Ferrett."

Mrs. Ferrett knotted her hands at the word "law."

"You wouldn't write letters to a shop, though, would you, any more than I would," pleaded Mrs. Ferrett, suddenly seeing escape in this remark, trying to calm Mrs. Brown.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Brown, who had not thought of this. "You mean someone else must have written them."

Mrs. Ferrett was so relieved to have an unknown person diverting the blows of Mrs. Brown from herself, that she was grateful to Mrs. Brown for putting the idea into her head. Mrs. Ferrett had a way of being grateful to her enemies.

"You say you didn't write them. I know I didn't. So there must be someone else," said Mrs. Brown. She was so relieved that her manner became softer and more expansive. She looked like a big cat which has just had a good meal. She contemplated Mrs. Ferrett with satisfaction, and her own case with wonder.

"Who wrote both lots of letters, yours and mine," said Mrs. Ferrett eagerly, profiting by any initiative which was likely to be approved by Mrs. Brown.

"Both lots?" said Mrs. Brown. Then she seemed to speak to herself. "I hadn't thought of that."

To find there was something Mrs. Brown had not thought of so revived Mrs. Ferrett that her gratitude increased.

"There *may* have been two women," said Mrs. Brown cautiously, thinking out this line of escape, and deciding to keep it open.

"I have kept the letters," declared Mrs. Ferrett fervently. "I could not bear to part with anything that was his."

"You mean to say you've kept them. Letters that weren't yours. You didn't send them back?" Mrs. Brown exclaimed.

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Ferrett, guiltily. "There was no address and no name, no surname."

"What is the Post Office for?" asked Mrs. Brown. "You've still got them?"

Mrs. Ferrett coloured more deeply. Keeping the other woman's letters had been her one act of guilt in her relationship with her husband and that had been committed after his death. Many times she had been tempted to destroy the letters but when she took the box which contained them from the bureau, she felt, she said, as if he were watching her, and that at any moment he might come into her room. But more important, they had been the one cruel, inexplicable thing in her life and she had some superstition that if she kept them, if she could, in undefined fashion, "take them with her," she could return them to him. She would just hand them to him. She would say nothing. She would just hope that he would care to explain. So profound was her belief as an orderly person in an ultimate Order and Justice.

"No one but myself has ever seen those letters," said Mrs. Ferrett weakly. "You've read them!" Mrs. Brown's fear seemed to Mrs. Ferrett not fear, but a scandalised sensibility.

"I oughtn't to have kept them I know. I ought not to have read them," said

Mrs. Ferrett. "It has often worried me. I didn't know what to do. I just kept them, I suppose, in case . . ."

"In case, what?" asked Mrs. Brown sharply, giving such a sudden grip to the chair that Mrs. Ferrett thought this time she really was going to spring on her.

"In case anything happened. You know," said Mrs. Ferrett.

"I don't know. In case *what* happened?"

"Well—in case I ever met this woman," said Mrs. Ferrett. "I could give them back to her."

Mrs. Brown opened her eyes wide and looked steadily at Mrs. Ferrett.

"You were thinking of *selling* them back to her," accused Mrs. Brown. "Blackmail! Mrs. Ferrett!"

"Selling? But that would be blackmail, Mrs. Brown," said Mrs. Ferrett. "You said so yourself. I've been an honest woman all my life. I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing. How can you suggest it? How dare you!" said Mrs. Ferrett.

"Really," continued Mrs. Ferrett, tears springing in her eyes and her voice in disorder. "Anyone would think I liked having letters like that. They ruined my life. They made me wretched for years," she sobbed. "The woman who wrote them will never know what I suffered. I only want to get rid of the letters to the right person and forget. Perhaps if she has any conscience, she will realise what she has done."

"Don't talk nonsense," Mrs. Brown said abruptly. "Your life wasn't ruined. If anyone's life was ruined, it was mine. You married again. That is to say, you hid your bigamy in another marriage." She looked contemptuously at Mrs. Ferrett. "You wouldn't catch me marrying again. I've got my pride."

"I didn't commit bigamy," Mrs. Ferrett said. "He was my husband. A good husband."

"Call him what you like," Mrs. Brown said. Then she smiled and her smile became a rough laugh. She laughed and laughed like a man, while Mrs. Ferrett gaped at her. She could not keep up with these transitions.

"He fooled the pair of us," said Mrs. Brown, wiping her eyes. "It's lucky for him he's dead. But I'd like to set eyes on that other woman. I'd like to know if there were two of them."

She was half wondering if she should creep down into Mrs. Ferrett's room when she was out and get back these letters, when Mrs. Ferrett said:

"I'll bring you the letters and we can see."

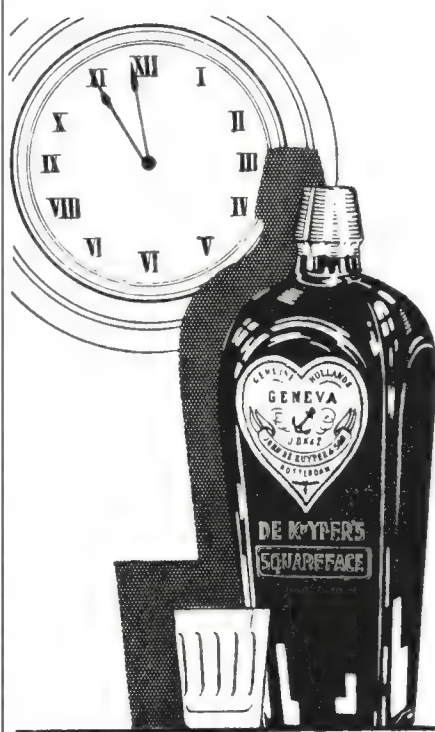
Mrs. Brown frowned because this put her in a serious difficulty.

"I burned mine," she said. "But bring them up. I can soon tell you if they are the same."

"After fifteen years?" asked Mrs. Ferrett.

"After a century. I can forgive but I can never forget," answered Mrs. Brown. "What you want is a bit more guts, Mrs. Ferrett."

It is impossible to describe the state of Mrs. Ferrett as she went downstairs to her room, except to say that she felt as if most of herself had been devoured alive and all that was left was a small obstinate piece which said over and over again, "He was my husband. He was my husband." It was not a question of believing or disbelieving Mrs. Brown; it was a question of saving herself from being mauled by the woman. Mrs. Ferrett's tears broke out of her eyes thoroughly when she got to her



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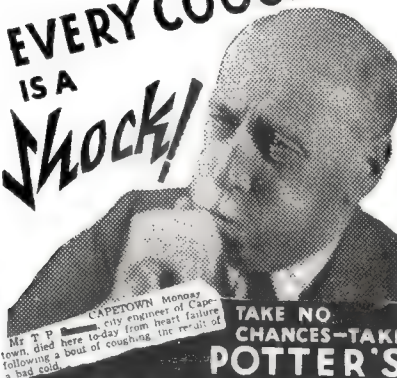
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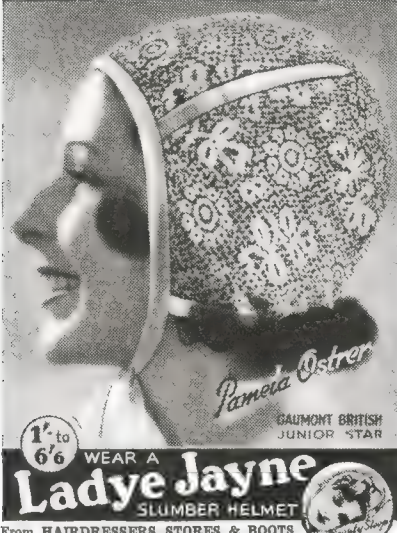
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room. But quickly they stopped. A humble, practical and lonely soul, she was saved not by any returning confidence in herself, but by the sight of her mahogany bed. The sight of the bed stopped her tears. It was impossible to believe that this sound, wide and familiar piece of mahogany that had held both Mr. Brown and Mr. Ferrett in their turn could have been implicated in crime or sin. It was not in the nature of mahogany. Mrs. Ferrett gazed with gratitude at its well-polished and impeccable serenity. Then the wardrobe, the dressing-table and the washstand joined in the silent chorus of assurance. They glowed like port wine. And Mrs. Ferrett could not help feeling how glad she was that she had this furniture and that she had looked after it so well all her life. It seemed almost in this moment to be repaying her care. Greater than a husband it was, greater even than two husbands.

But she had been ordered by Mrs. Brown to find the letters and Mrs. Ferrett went hurriedly to her desk. She could not imagine what good the letters would do but she could not have thought of disobeying Mrs. Brown. To Mrs. Ferrett it seemed like tempting Providence, this passion to discover Mr. Brown's mistress; she (Mrs. Ferrett) had had a lifelong dread of meeting the woman. She had a dread of all emotion because it disordered everything. Faced by disorderly passion incarnate in her dead husband's mistress, she would not have been able to say more than "How do you do?" And then—she had never been able to imagine what she would say.

In the meantime Mrs. Brown had got up from her chair and loosened her stays. This made her look larger. Then talking all the time excitedly to herself, she had gone steadying herself on chairs, tables and the mantelpiece, to the curtain by the fireplace and taken down a brandy bottle which she kept behind a hat box. Her hands shaking, she wandered about looking for a tumbler, stopping at every step to listen for Mrs. Ferrett on the stairs. But Mrs. Brown was too dazed to look long. She went back to the curtain, put her head behind it and took a long gulp from the bottle itself. She stood behind the curtain until she had got over the first shock of the drink. When she came out, the curtains dragged on her wig and loosened it, moving it a little to one side. Then she stood staring at her canaries. The birds were silent.

The brandy, but much more the duel and her own cleverness, had intoxicated Mrs. Brown. Her vanity had grown with her alarm. She was so carried away that she had already stopped worrying about how she should maintain and develop her story. She was reckless of the future, the recklessness of those who are fighting for their life (or their legend), in which failure means exposure and shame. She let this great difficulty slide and, like many liars, became obsessed with an unimportant difficulty: What was she to do to keep the letters when they were brought? She was still gnawing at this problem when Mrs. Ferrett came back.

"Have you got them?" asked Mrs. Brown suspiciously.

Mrs. Ferrett was alarmed to see Mrs. Brown was standing up. She was also perturbed by the angle of the wig. Being lower on her forehead now, it made Mrs. Brown look as bullish as if her head were down and she were ready to charge.

"Yes," said Mrs. Ferrett.

"Let's see them," said Mrs. Brown.

She opened her eyes greedily at the small brown-paper parcel. She had not expected a parcel.

Mrs. Ferrett brought them, put them on the table and stood back. Mrs. Brown felt she had a gong beating inside her breast, louder and louder, deafening her. She was about to speak. But Mrs. Ferrett, seeing the rising and falling of Mrs. Brown's thick bosom, took fright and said, "I—I'll leave them with you. I've got to go downstairs."

Mrs. Brown waited until the sound of Mrs. Ferrett's steps had gone. She even went out on to the landing and looked over to be sure Mrs. Ferrett was not about. Then she came back and picked up the parcel and turned it over and over. Overcome by the emotion of having the letters in her possession, the letters at whose existence she had shuddered all her life, Mrs. Brown sat down and held them limply in her lap. An unexpected thing had happened to her. She had stood panting for them, waiting to snatch them from Mrs. Ferrett's hands; instead she had become helpless. For fifteen years she had been living a life of fantasy and now the cause of it all was here in her lap. Here was the origin of fifteen years of lying—a brown-paper parcel. She was so shocked by this reality that she could already feel the whole meaning and protection of her life dissolving.

Mrs. Brown felt suddenly tired and will-less, a creature fading—will-less as old women are when they have at last got their own way. She was faced by the crisis of middle age. Once she opened the packet she would become an old woman.

At last, when her fears were too much for her, she blew her nose hard with a snort, and set to work impatiently. Inside, to her surprise, was a coloured cardboard box, such as is used for note-paper. She tried to remember when she had ever sent a cardboard box to Mr. Brown. She opened the box. There lay four letters in their envelopes, with the startling postmarks of fifteen years before on them, addressed in her now blackened handwriting, to Mr. Brown. Four letters.

Mrs. Brown took them out and peered into the box for more, staring into the bottom of it and the deep lid as well with the intentness of a chimpanzee. In her fear she had pictured dozens of letters, the four had grown to forty; she had imagined them in a safe, sorted into bundles, or in some locked and secret drawer of one of those luxurious desks she had seen in films. A butler stood by, a revolver was in the top drawer, the missing documents had the mystery, the very polished mystery of a family skeleton of one of the older families. There was a boiled shirt, manorian oak and a man with shining teeth, oiled hair and an American accent. There were hundreds of letters, there were threats and counter-threats, private inquiry agents in taxis, the wife of Mr. Brown telephoned daily to a man (two days' growth of beard and bitten finger-nails) playing cards in a Soho café. The heroine of this drama was a glamorous woman whose only crime was that she had loved—close up, the *soi-disant* Mrs. Brown.

And now the circuit that had thrown the picture upon Mrs. Brown's imagination failed. There were only four letters and they were in a cheap stationery box. Mrs. Brown took them out and read them.

"My darling Freddy," the first began.

An hour passed. Another hour. When Mrs. Ferrett returned Mrs. Brown was still sitting by the table. The letters



put back into their envelopes were clutched in Mrs. Brown's hands. Her head had sunk forward. Her mouth was half-open. She had not answered Mrs. Ferrett's timid knock, nor did she move or turn her head when Mrs. Ferrett came across the room.

"Are you all right, Mrs. Brown?" asked Mrs. Ferrett, looking at the dead, sunken position of the old lady. There was no answer from the gaping mouth.

"Mrs. Brown, what has happened? Mrs. Brown?" asked Mrs. Ferrett in fear, and went to touch her.

"Nothing," a deep grunting reply like a snore came from the motionless figure of Mrs. Brown, who was a woman who hated to be touched by other women.

"Oh!" Mrs. Ferrett exclaimed with a nervous half-laugh. She had thought Mrs. Brown was dead. "Oh, dear, you gave me a turn."

A few more minutes passed before Mrs. Brown, apparently unaware of Mrs. Ferrett's agitation, turned her head and looked at Mrs. Ferrett.

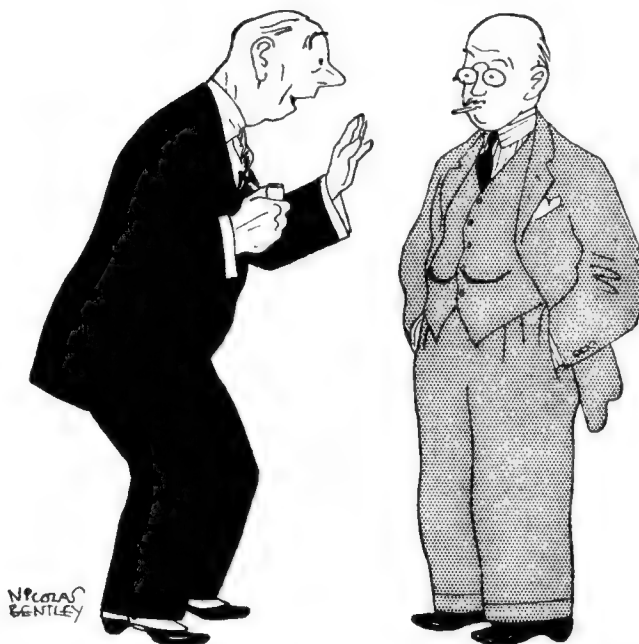
"It's the same person," she said, with a revival of her fighting tone. And turned her head again, her thoughts sinking into herself. The effect of this upon Mrs. Ferrett was to alarm her with the feeling that Mrs. Brown had discovered terrible and unsuspected things, intangible and undescribable, and all the more terrible because Mrs. Ferrett could not imagine what they were. She did not know that Mrs. Brown had in the past hour been re-living in its reality a life she had forgotten, seeing with the detachment of fifteen years, the person who was really herself, when they were compared with her meaningless fantasies. The feared sentences she had so often thought about: "It was good to give the old b... the slip" made no impression. Merely it was hard to believe that they referred to a silly, dull woman like Mrs. Ferrett. But the passionate sentences, so awkwardly breaking out between bits of news and gossip, had shaken her: "I kiss the little mole." "I was frightened and when I woke up you were sleeping so fast. You did not know I was looking at you." "Then I feel when we are together I am a different person. . . ." "But I can only think of all the things I want to tell you when it is too late and you have gone."

Trees without leaves, a movement of the warmth of spring. The first day when he came into the shop he told the girl at the counter he wanted to see the buyer, and had his case of samples already unlocked and a full range of autumn patterns in it. She had seen him in the mirror and she had thought at once, "I shall be very unhappy." She had to meet him again to try to see, once more, whether he ever told the truth. He laughed loudly in the theatre that night, taller than those near him, like a man who has a lot of everything to spare. He was always catching trains. He borrowed five pounds from her. They sat in The White Horse, singing with the crowd. He kissed her one day in a full tram and bought her flowers. He drove his car fast with one arm round her and from a bedroom window all night came the sound of cars like his going on for ever to the coast.

She could not work because he was everywhere. She was often alone. Now he was with his wife. Listening for the bell, the knocker, the telephone, looking out of the window, arguing, for example, "If I go to Manchester we could come back in the train." "I am always waiting," the letters said. "A man outside is dressed in red trousers and blue sash and is slashing at the air

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with a sword and shouting. But you can't hear him. It looks as if he's shouting nothing. Darling, . . . I'm fagged out. . . . I wish . . . Trade's slow. . . . It's a bad season. . . . I think Miss Cowper suspects. She said . . . Supposing the old girl came into the shop . . . I will be there, at the barrier. I'm excited. . . . Can't stop now. . . . It does not matter how old you are and I had kept my looks and my hair was beautiful just like my mother's. She said, "That hair will bring you trouble, my girl."

Mrs. Brown was looking into the room. The canaries were not singing though the sun was in their cages. She did not see the room. A pain had started and everything she saw had the shape of the pain.

Mrs. Brown suddenly looked up and glared at Mrs. Ferrett.

"He was a swine," Mrs. Brown said. "I knew it must be the same woman," Mrs. Ferrett said, waiting.

"You did, did you? And do you know who she is?" sneered Mrs. Brown.

"No. No. I told you I didn't."

"Well, he was a swine," growled Mrs. Brown again.

"He was my husband," said Mrs. Ferrett, drawing herself up. "My husband was very good to me. He was certainly not—what you say."

Mrs. Brown looked at her wearily. The pain in her body was growing. It became all the things she saw. It took on, for example, the shape of Mrs. Ferrett, narrow and sharp. Mrs. Brown found this easier and as she stared at Mrs. Ferrett, she felt equal to it. The sly look came into her eyes.

"Your husband!" she mocked. "My husband! Whose husband? What's it matter. What's it matter, eh? I gave him up, you gave him up, he gave us up, eh? You need your pride. He had it. He didn't love you, Mrs. Ferrett. Read those letters if you want to know who he loved, the twister."

She shuffled in her chair and an expression of jocular watchfulness lit her malice.

"That's the woman he loved, Mrs. Ferrett. I don't want another woman's leavings."

"How dare you say he never loved me?" said Mrs. Ferrett. "I know. I know he loved me. No one can say he didn't love me. No one. I don't know about you, Mrs. Brown, but I know he loved me."

Mrs. Brown looked at Mrs. Ferrett, who had risen from her chair.

"He had a mole," said Mrs. Brown, in a deep, reminiscent voice, "on his stomach. He was a strong man and weighed sixteen stone. He had good hands, interesting ones. I've seen him break in a door with one lunge."

"A mole—please, Mrs. Brown. How can you say that?" said Mrs. Ferrett, her voice shaking. "He was a man with ideals."

"Ideals, my eye," sniffed Mrs. Brown. "A bigamist and leading another woman up the garden. Where did his money go? You didn't get any. That other woman got it. She had the fine time. She got everything. Clever woman. Personally, I admire her."

"She did not," declared Mrs. Ferrett. "Don't be a fool."

"I'm not a fool."

"She got everything. He never loved you."

"He never loved you, then, either," said Mrs. Ferrett, carried beyond herself.

"You say he didn't love me!" said Mrs. Brown, suddenly roused to anger, all the emotion of that hour coming to its head.

"N-no," said Mrs. Ferrett. "I didn't say you. Oh, I don't know. It's all so long ago. I don't know what I'm saying. Please, Mrs. Brown, it's all so worrying. I meant the other woman—the one who wrote those letters."

"You say he didn't love her," cried Mrs. Brown. "Use your eyes and look at them. You read them once though they weren't addressed to you."

"He couldn't," cried Mrs. Ferrett.

"He did. I tell you he did," shouted Mrs. Brown with exasperation.

"Read them. Read them!" she shouted. She picked up the letters from her lap and threw them at Mrs. Ferrett.

"It was me he loved. I wrote those letters," cried Mrs. Brown. "They are my letters. I wrote them. Now you know it. And don't tell me you loved him. It was me. Here," she cried, getting up from her chair and scrambling down at Mrs. Ferrett's feet, grabbing at the letters. "They are mine. Give them to me. They're mine."

As she grovelled there her wig fell off and at her feet Mrs. Ferrett saw an old, excited woman with sketchy hair on a head grey as putty and almost bald. Mrs. Brown rose up panting and glaring, stuffing the letters into her bodice.

"Mrs. Brown," cried Mrs. Ferrett.

"Mrs. Brown!" mocked Mrs. Brown in a screaming voice. "I'm not Mrs. Brown."

She leaned on the table and then collapsed into her chair, laughing hysterically. Mrs. Ferrett, white with terror, but even then, decorous and orderly, picked up the fallen wig.

They put Mrs. Brown to bed and they called the doctor. "Her nose was bleeding. Her nose was bleeding," Mrs. Ferrett said to the doctor, sure that he did not understand. Mrs. Brown lay hardly speaking for a week, then another week. For a long time Mrs. Ferrett went rigid when the doctor came, trying to say, "She will not die, will she?" He was one of those tired, dandyish middle-aged doctors, who will not say "Yes" or "No" to any question. Every time just before he went away from the house Mrs. Ferrett leaned stiffly towards him in the tiled hall trying to speak, longing to detain him and tell him the full story of Mrs. Brown.

"Good morning," the doctor said, picking up his hat and away he went, smiling past her, bewildering her with smiles, black-coated, the ambassador of some sardonic embassy. Death, who came and went, playing with her and non-committal. Mrs. Ferrett had no one to whom she could speak. She was a woman of sixty.

One day after he had gone, she was standing in the room and the thought came to her as she looked through the lace curtains, "This is the beginning of old age. I am alone." It was the first time in her life she had thought this: that no explanation of anything would be given, no exact account of anything would ever exist, and that she herself would never be able to explain anything. The pavements outside were flat. No traffic came down the street.

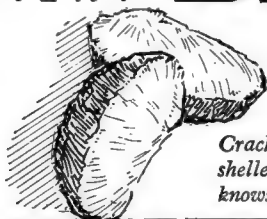
What she wanted to explain was . . . When she was married the second time . . . No, when she was married for the first time . . . but it was before that, when she was a young girl, and before that a little girl, yes, when she was a little girl. When she was a little girl she used to go down the street listening to the school bell and saying to herself, "To St. Anne's School. To St. Anne's School. To St. Anne's School," like the bell. . . . But before that, before she was sent to her school and she was a





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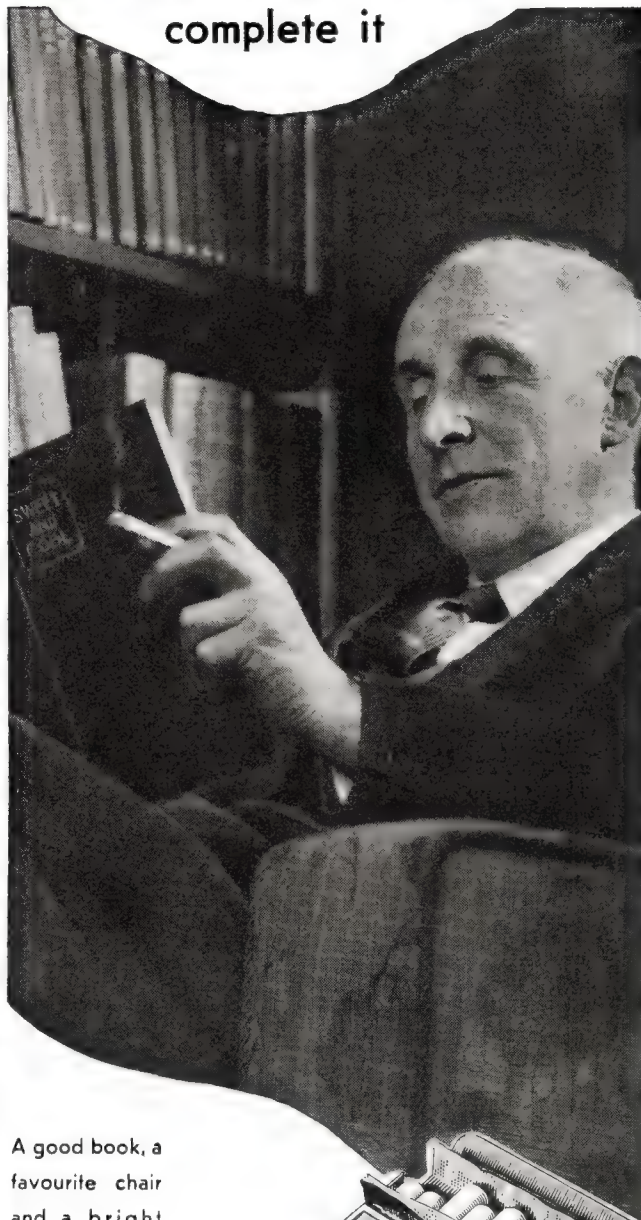
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**The SOLE CAUSE OF DRY FEET**

**PURITAN LEATHER SOLES**

Puritan Tanneries Ltd., Runcorn, Cheshire.

very little girl, a baby almost, and before that.

"Pull yourself together. You are not alone," Mrs. Ferrett stopped herself. "Mrs. Brown hasn't had her beef tea and it is eleven. How time flies!"

She went from the room and down into the basement. She poured the beef tea into the saucepan and lit the gas, feeling the warmth at once. "Poor Mrs. Brown," she thought. "I won't let her get up till Monday, she had far better stay there, the poor woman. To be ill and left alone like that with no one. I've got the house and the boarders and my health and she has got nobody. And I've got my two boys, too. They're alive and doing well, there is a lot in that. She doesn't like it too hot."

She poured the beef tea into the cup and put it on the tray. Not until she got to the last two flights of stairs did she feel uneasy. Mrs. Brown's room was so untidy. She sat among her things and her ruined lies like some pitiful old overgrown spider in its broken web. Bald, querulous, poor and alone she lay. Fancy my being afraid of this poor woman all my life, Mrs. Ferrett thought when she went into the room. How strange it is I don't hate her! She had not hated Mrs. Brown when she had cried out, "I wrote those letters." She had not been angry about all the lies and tortures of that day. It had been like a dream all the time, and a dream someone else was dreaming.

The moment Mrs. Brown had said, "I wrote those letters," Mrs. Ferrett had one thought only, "You poor woman." She was filled with the strangest, least manageable and most disorderly impulse of love she had ever known. Far from blaming Mrs. Brown for her lies and anger, she blamed herself for having been so stupid as not to have seen the truth from the first.

Mrs. Ferrett had been nursing Mrs. Brown day and night.

It had all happened so long ago. In another sense, it seemed to be all happening now. They had all been taken back twenty years. Mr. Brown was still alive; twenty years ago was a warmer time. When Mrs. Ferrett had first discovered the letters she remembered now that together with the sick hatred and the fear, she had felt also a mysterious impulse of the heart, a love for the unknown other woman. Now love had come again. And after the love, pity.

Mrs. Ferrett went into the room.

"Here's your tea," she said, as to a child.

The old lady was lying propped on the pile of pillows, a medicine bottle was on the table beside her. She was pale, the blood had drained to a few wavy red veins in her cheeks, the eyes watched Mrs. Ferrett wherever she walked in the room, shrinking from her sometimes, sometimes gazing with intent suspicion. Mrs. Brown lay wigless, weak and empty like some empty chrysalis from which the fantastic butterfly has flown.

"Oh," grunted Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Ferrett thought, "The poor soul is too proud to say she is grateful."

"Are you coming back?" asked Mrs. Brown quickly, when Mrs. Ferrett took the tray.

"I'll be back soon," said Mrs. Ferrett.

"I don't want you," Mrs. Brown grunted defiantly.

"But I like to."

Mrs. Brown looked her disbelief of the words.

When she had gone, Mrs. Brown stared at the brown door and the white spots where the paint had blistered, waiting for Mrs. Ferrett to return.

The days had gone by like this.

Neither of them mentioned Mr. Brown or the letters. In the evenings Mrs. Ferrett came up to chat and sew until the time to say, "Now you must go to sleep like a good girl." Mrs. Brown used to wonder what malevolent object Mrs. Ferrett's generosity had. Mrs. Ferrett used to think, "God sent her to me; isn't it funny the things He does? And I nearly sent her away." Mrs. Ferrett saw that none of the boarders came into the room for she knew Mrs. Brown was afraid of them now.

One day Mrs. Ferrett went to the mantelpiece and brought the photograph of Mr. Brown to the bedside table. There was something incongruous, she felt, in the fact that he was still grinning at them. She coloured. "You'd like that," she said.

Mrs. Brown looked with sharp suspicion but did not speak. She could not and Mrs. Ferrett went on talking gossip about the boarders.

"Young people of to-day are more natural than we were, don't you think, Mrs. Brown?"

"I don't trust them. They're sly," Mrs. Brown said. "He was sly," she added, pointing to Mr. Brown.

"You mustn't say that, dear. You loved him very much."

"She's a sly one. What's her game?" thought Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Brown did not answer. She watched Mrs. Ferrett's needle as it sewed. "She's sly, too, the poor old soul," thought Mrs. Ferrett.

"Ah, well," sighed Mrs. Ferrett. It really began to seem to her that he really had been Mrs. Brown's husband and not hers.

When she got up to go, Mrs. Brown put out her hand and gripped her wrist.

"Leave the light on on the landing," she said.

"Why, of course, dear."

Mrs. Brown frowned at the word "dear." "It's not for me. I don't mind the dark," she said.

Mrs. Ferrett thought: "I had my two boys after their father died. Then I had their stepfather when they left home. I'm glad I've got the old lady."

She went about thinking this every day and the old lady lay in her room thinking about her, wondering what she was doing, which room she was in, when she was coming again. She would ask, "Did the meat come in the end?" or "What does he want to change his room for?"—things like that about the house. There were bad days when Mrs. Brown's malice came out. How could he have married a dull, simple woman like Mrs. Ferrett? Mrs. Brown was sharp, dry and mocking on these days.

"I could never understand second marriages," she said cuttingly. "It's an insult to the dead. You can't have two husbands in heaven—if you go there. What are you going to do then?"

She sat and glared.

"I've no doubt they've got it all arranged," replied Mrs. Ferrett. "Now, you go to sleep," she said.

She did not like Mrs. Brown in these tempers.

When she was by herself Mrs. Ferrett was angry with the old lady; evidently as she got better she was going to be more and more difficult. Mrs. Ferrett thought it most cruel and unkind to suggest—for that is what it looked like—that she would have to give up one of her husbands in heaven and then Mrs. Brown could have him at last. She was disconcerted by this piece of metaphysical cunning. She decided, just to remind the old lady of the circumstances, to show her the photograph of her two boys. A woman who had two sons, had



surely unshakable claims on a man.  
 "Here are my two boys—men, I should say—I thought you'd like to see them," said Mrs. Ferrett. It was the only cat-tish thing she had done in all the time she had been nursing Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Brown took the photograph avidly. Nothing could show her more clearly that, as far as Mrs. Ferrett's husband was concerned she (Mrs. Brown) had nothing. Nothing in the world. Mrs. Brown's head sunk and she stuck out her trembling lips.

"They're not like you," Mrs. Brown said bitterly.

Mrs. Ferrett stiffened and then coloured deeply with anger and repentance. They bickered and Mrs. Brown became excited. In the night there was a bang on the floor which was the signal to Mrs. Ferrett, who slept below in order to be near. She found Mrs. Brown groaning and fevered, with the clothes thrown off the bed. She was very ill that night and for two days got no better.

Mrs. Ferrett, remorseful and in tears, scarcely left the room. She nursed her passionately, longing to make amends. She looked into her eyes to read what was there. She could read nothing. "I've killed her. I've killed her," she groaned in her room.

But she had not. Mrs. Brown recovered. She said nothing except,

"I'm alone. Don't leave me." And when Mrs. Ferrett said she would never, never leave her, would do anything for her, Mrs. Brown said,

"You've been a good friend to me." She repeated this often.

"I've no one in the world."

"You have me."

Mrs. Brown stared.

"And I have you," Mrs. Ferrett added.

Mrs. Brown grunted.

They were friends. One day Mrs. Brown laughed a coarse big laugh. They both laughed. They laughed and laughed and did not know what they were laughing about. "She'll be in a rage next," Mrs. Ferrett thought. "She's better. Quite better." And Mrs. Brown did get into a rage and Mrs. Ferrett was delighted for knowing she would. Mrs. Ferrett called out, "You're nothing but a bad-tempered old woman."

They had quarrelled because Mrs. Ferrett had said that she would never tell anyone the true story and that Mrs. Brown should be Mrs. Brown for ever.

"I don't care if you do," Mrs. Brown had said. But she was relieved. All the time during her illness she had been thinking and scheming about this.

"You're a fool, Mrs. Ferrett, a fool," she said.

The next day Mrs. Brown got up and the maid helped her with her wig. In a week the old lady had begun to resume her sway. The young men and women returning from their holidays and hearing she had been ill, came to see her.

During the daytime when they were out, Mrs. Brown would come downstairs, looking for Mrs. Ferrett.

"What do you want, dear?"

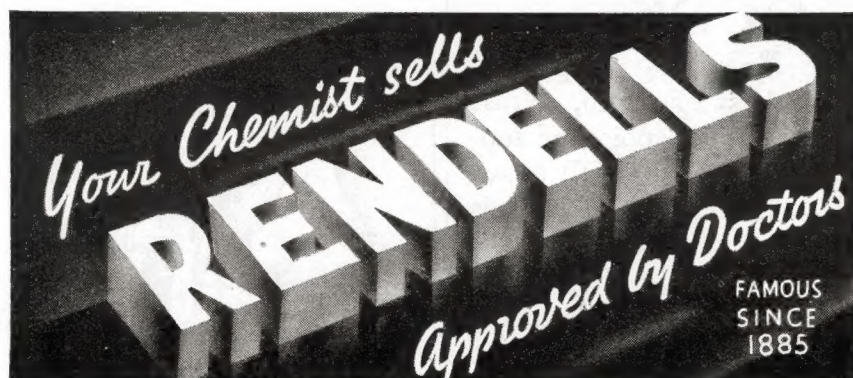
"I just wondered where you were."

New people came to the house. There was a young woman who took one of the second-floor rooms. The other boarders took her to see Mrs. Brown and to watch the familiar fun begin. Mrs. Ferrett liked this girl and was a little upset when the girl innocently told her Mrs. Brown's story and added: "But then, even if he was unfaithful to her she had her two sons. They must have been a great comfort to her. She showed me the photographs. She is very proud of them."

But Mrs. Ferrett left the photograph with Mrs. Brown and said nothing.



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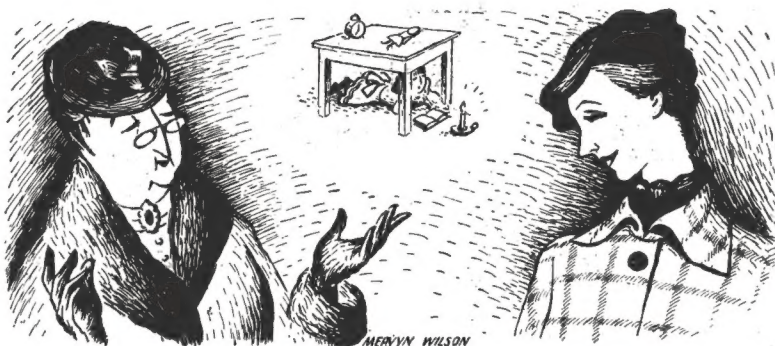
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"I sat and read it, under the nursery table."

## Conversation in a Book-Shop

by E. M. DELAFIELD

Illustrations by Mervyn Wilson

"I SHOULD like to give my great-niece a little present to remember me by, dear."

"Aunt Florence, how kind of you!"

"Not at all, dear. We might come in here and choose it. I always say there's nothing like a book. I must have been just about dear little Celia's age—six years old—when I was given *Gulliver's Travels*, and I remember to this day how I sat and read it, under the nursery table, by the light of a candle, hour after hour."

"Did you really, Aunt Florence? Why did you sit under the table?"

"Children sat where they could, in those days, and didn't loll about in arm-chairs. To the day of her death I never saw my dear mother lean back in a chair—and she had fifteen children and lived to be ninety-four."

"How marvellous! I don't think Celia is quite up to *Gulliver's Travels*, yet, though she can quite read words of three letters, on her good days."

"Can I assist you, madam?"

"Aunt Florence dear..."

"All right, dear, all right. I heard him. I'm looking for a book."

"Yes, madam. Any particular book?"

"A little gift."

"We have a very charming Pocket Classic Series, madam. Or if you care for poetry, there's a new edition of the Sonnets just appeared, at three and sixpence."

"It's for a young lady."

"Ah, yes, madam. Would a novel appeal to her? We're selling a great number of copies of *Moggie Kicks over the Traces*, or perhaps she might prefer something lighter—*Murder's Such Fun* is in great demand."

"Oh, dear no! She's only—"

"Dear, please leave this to Aunt Florence. My great-niece, I ought to have mentioned, is a mere child. In the nursery, in fact."

"Quite, madam. Then perhaps our Juvenile department..."



"My great-niece, I ought to mention, is a mere child..."

"Very well. I should like to see what you have. Come along, dear. Children have far too many books written for them nowadays, I always say."

"Yes, Aunt Florence. Oh, this looks attractive, and Celia simply adores dogs."

"No, dear, nothing about dogs. No one is fonder of dogs than I am, but in their proper place, is what I always say."

"Yes, I see. What about cats, Aunt Florence? I do think these pictures of the kittens are rather sweet."

"Not cats, dear. Your poor grandpapa never could bear them. He used to turn quite faint if there was a cat anywhere in his neighbourhood."



"Some popular tales of pirates?"

"Wasn't that rather inconvenient?"

"No, dear, why should it be? Your grandmother always saw to it that no cats ever came anywhere near him. But it gave me a dislike of the creatures. Have you any books that are not about animals?"

"We have some very popular tales of pirates, madam—or would the young lady care for a story of school life? *The Lower Fourth Goes Mad* is very much liked."

"I don't care for the title at all. Have you a copy of *The Fairchild Family*?"

"Not in stock, madam. We could procure one."

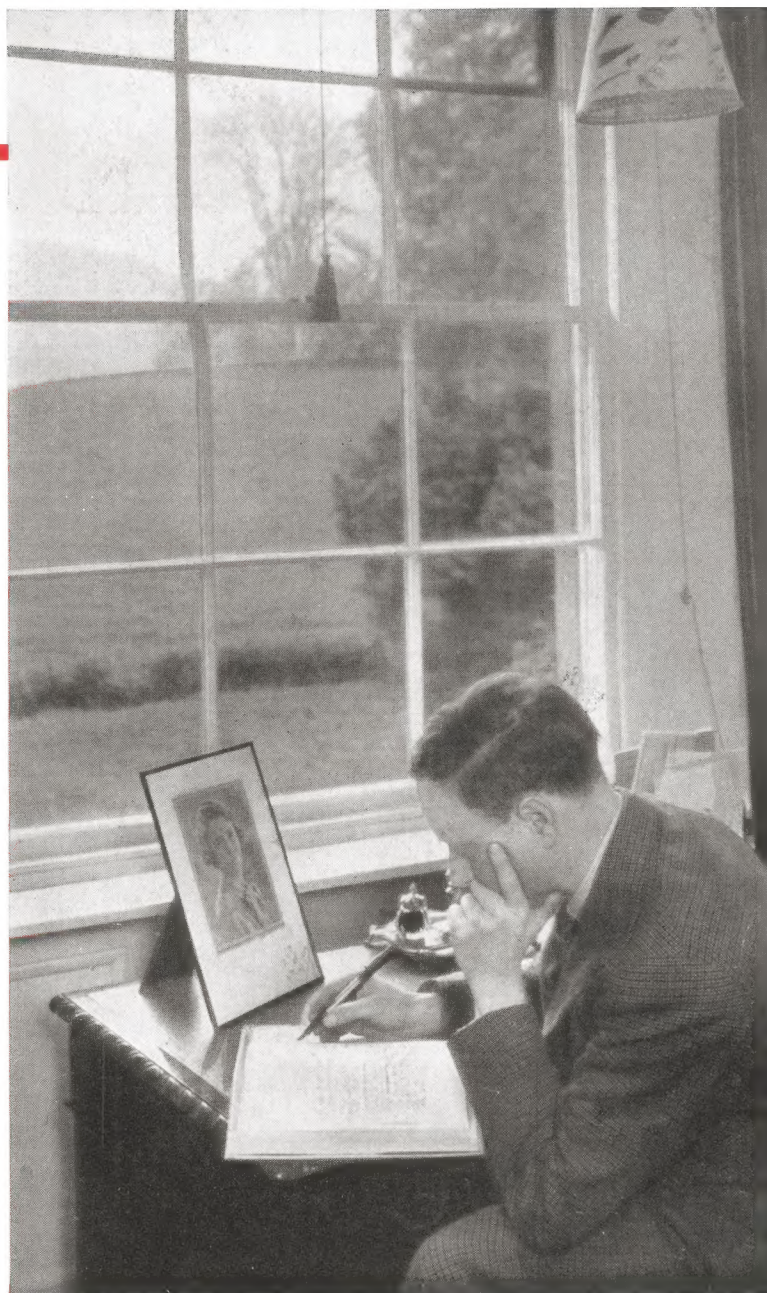
"Aunt Florence, it's so kind of you... only I'm not absolutely sure whether Celia..."

"If she can't read it to herself, dear, you can read it aloud to her. I'm sure she'll like it very much. I quite well remember reading it in my crib, by the glimmer of a nightlight, when I was four years old."

"I will procure a copy, madam. And if the young lady, for any reason, should wish to exchange it, there will be no difficulty whatsoever. We have a new volume of *Mickey Mouse*..."



FEBRUARY—ONE SHILLING



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